DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 365 604 SO 023 611

AUTHOR Niedergang, Mark; McCoy, Martha, Ed.
TITLE Homelessness in America: What Should We Do? Public Talk Series.
INSTITUTION Topsfield Foundation, Pomfret, CT. Study Circles Resource Center.
PUB DATE Oct 91
NOTE 40p.
AVAILABLE FROM Study Circles Resource Center, P.O. Box 203, Pomfret, CT 06258 ($2).
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Education; *Discussion Groups; Economically Disadvantaged; *Homeless People; *Housing Needs; Leaders Guides; Poverty; *Public Policy; *Social Responsibility
IDENTIFIERS *Study Circles

ABSTRACT

This program guide provides a forum for discussing the different beliefs that influence public policy about homelessness as well as policy goals. The central question is addressed in two parts: (1) what society ought to do for homeless people; and (2) laying out a range of possible answers for part 1. Four possible answers are discussed: help only those unable to work; provide the bare minimum of food and shelter for all; food and shelter are not enough--provide services and training; and ensure that everyone has adequate housing. In addition to an introductory letter, the following program information is included: (1) homelessness in the United States--a framework for discussion; (2) background information on the problem of homelessness; (3) what should be done about homelessness in the United States--ethical considerations and four approaches for dealing with homelessness; (4) supplementary reading; (5) suggestions for leading this discussion; (6) leading a study circle; (7) the role of the participant; (8) follow-up form; and (9) Study Circles Resource Center publications. (NLA)

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STUDY CIRCLES RESOURCE CENTER

# Public Talk Series

# HOMELESSNESS IN AMERICA
## What Should We Do?

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**October 1991**

*"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."*
Margaret Mead

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*Homelessness in America: What Should We Do?* is a project of
The Study Circles Resource Center of Topsfield Foundation, Inc.

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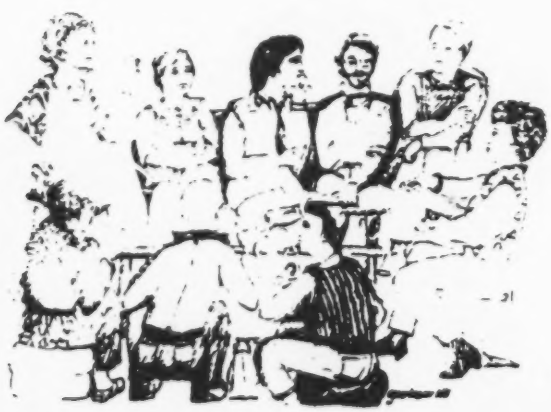

The Study Circles Resource Center (SCRC) is funded by the Topsfield Foundation, Inc., a private, non-profit, non-advocacy foundation dedicated to advancing deliberative democracy and improving the quality of public life in the United States. SCRC carries out this mission by promoting the use of small-group, democratic, highly participatory discussions known as study circles.



**Please write the Study Circles Resource Center at PO Box 203, Pomfret, CT 06258, call (203) 928-2616, or FAX (203) 928-3713 for more information on study circles and the Study Circles Resource Center.**

STUDY CIRCLES RESOURCE CENTER

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October 1991

Dear study circle organizer,

In a democracy, it is crucial that the public have input into the decisions government makes. Citizens must listen to a variety of viewpoints, consider the consequences of all positions, and make hard choices. The Study Circles Resource Center's Public Talk Series is based on this belief. The programs of the series are designed to assist in the discussion of critical social and political issues; each offers a balanced, non-partisan presentation of a spectrum of views.

*Homelessness in America: What Should We Do?* provides the direction and information your group will need in order to discuss a problem that raises basic questions about what American society stands for. We present this program as a way for you to discuss the different beliefs that influence public policy about homelessness as well as possible goals for that policy.

The central question in this program, "What Should We Do About Homelessness in America?," is addressed in two parts. "Part I: Some Ethical Considerations" presents some questions to aid in your discussion of what, if anything, society *ought* to do for homeless people. "Part II: Four Approaches for Dealing with Homelessness" lays out a range of possible answers to the question of what we should do. They are:

1) Help only those who are unable to work.
2) Provide the bare minimum of food and shelter to all.
3) Food and shelter are not enough – provide services and training.
4) Ensure that every American has adequate housing.

We hope that you will use this program to discuss homelessness both in terms of what our nation ought to do and in terms of the current situation in your own community, town, city, or state. We encourage you to invite your organization's members, your friends, neighbors, and co-workers to join with you in a discussion of this issue.

**Organizing a small-group discussion on this issue**

This material is designed for use in a single-session program of approximately two hours. You will need to recruit between 5 and 20 participants, decide on a time and place for the meeting, select a discussion leader, photocopy the materials (participants will need copies of items marked with an asterisk in the table of contents), and distribute them to participants. If there is not enough time to mail information to



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participants prior to meeting, the components that should be handed out during the meeting are "A Framework for Discussion," both parts of "What Should We Do About Homelessness in America?," "Suggestions for Participants," and the "Follow-up Form."

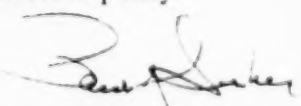
Your most important task is choosing the discussion leader. This person need not be an expert on homelessness, but should have some familiarity with it. The leader should be able to encourage participants to freely express their thoughts while he or she preserves some focus to the session as a whole. A commitment to balance and impartiality is essential. Included for the leader's use are "Suggestions for Leading *Homelessness in America: What Should We Do?*" and "Leading a Study Circle." (Please see the back cover of this packet for information on additional resources on organizing and leading study circles available from SCRC.)

**Organizing further discussions**

The Study Circles Resource Center (SCRC) makes this material available in part to encourage discussion of this particular issue; our end goal, however, is to encourage citizen debate on the wide range of issues confronting our society, whether local or national. We hope that the use of this material will inspire your group to become a "study circle," meeting regularly to discuss issues of common concern. If, for example, your group wants to continue its discussion of homelessness, some suggestions can be found at the end of Part II and in "What You Can Do About Homelessness."

Several options are available to groups wanting to carry on to discuss other issues. See the back cover of this packet for a list of other programs in the Public Talk Series. Also noted on that page is SCRC's clearinghouse list of discussion programs developed by a variety of organizations. If your group would like to take on an issue for which no ready-made discussion package is available, a few good newspaper or magazine articles can provide the basis for dialogue. Please call us at SCRC for advice on developing your own study circle material.

We invite you to engage in the rewarding discussion that takes place when concerned individuals meet in informal gatherings to discuss all sides of the critical issues facing our society. We encourage you then to communicate the outcomes of your discussion to relevant policymakers; only then can your informed judgment influence state and national policy.



Paul J. Aicher
Chairman

# HOMELESSNESS IN AMERICA
## What Should We Do?
## A Framework for Discussion

*Joe Cowens* lives on the streets of Atlanta, Georgia. He usually sleeps in the sheltered alcove of a large church in a neighborhood, but sometimes the neighbors complain and he is chased away. In cold weather he goes to a homeless shelter downtown; when it's warm he sleeps under a highway, along with a dozen other men. His only possessions are a sleeping bag, a shopping bag full of clothes, and – in the winter – a coat.*

*"I like it by the church," he said, "'cause it's safer there. Sometimes I been robbed at the shelter, and under the highway there are fights and guys hassle you." When asked why he's homeless, he says he can't work because of a bad back he got on a warehouse job. What about lighter work? "Yeah, well, I guess I should get in a training program or something, but there aren't any jobs anywhere now."*

*Joe is sometimes neat, clean, and shaven, but more often his clothes are dirty and smelly and he looks unkempt. While he can sometimes hold a conversation, at other times he seems too disoriented. People say Joe often has conversations with himself. Most of the neighbors don't mind him, and some give him money when he asks. But others have accused him of being a "peeping Tom."*

*Joe has spent time in a state mental institution (9 months) and was in jail for a year for stealing a purse at knifepoint. He is an alcoholic and a frequent user of drugs, usually marijuana or crack. How does he eat? "I work the streets downtown [panhandle], do odd jobs at the labor pool. I can usually eat at one of the soup kitchens or shelters, I don't need much money."*

* Note: Most of the stories about homeless people that appear in this material are only loosely based on actual cases. The only exception is the story excerpted from Jonathan Kozol's book, based on an interview he conducted; he changed names and other identifying details.

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*Annie and Robert Harrington and their three children live in a "welfare hotel" for homeless families. They're given $13 every two weeks to pay for travel costs of hunting for apartments; but the rental limit for a family of four under the government rent subsidy program where they live is $270. Annie understands, after four years of searching, that her family will never find a home until the subsidy is increased.*

*"Places I see, they want $350, $400, $500. Out in [my old neighborhood] recently, I met an older lady. She had seen me crying, so she asked me, 'What's the matter?' I told her how long I had been looking for a home. She said, 'Well, I own a couple of apartments.' The rental was $365. She said that she would skip the extra month and the deposit. I had told her what my husband does, my children. I had Doby with me. I believe she took a liking to me. So I was excited. Happy! And she handed me the lease and proof of ownership and told me I should take them to my [social] worker, and she gave me her phone number. A nice lady. . . . It's like a dream: This lady likes me and we're going to have a home! My worker denied me for $365. I was denied. $365. My social worker is a nice man, but he said: 'I have to tell you, Mrs. Harrington. Your limit is $270.' Then I thought of this: The difference is only $95. I'll make it up out of my food allowance. We can lighten up on certain things. Not for the children but ourselves. We'll eat less food at first. Then I can get a job. Robert will finish his computer*

*course. . . . They told me no. I was denied."* [excerpted from: Jonathan Kozol, Rachel and Her Children: Homeless Families in America *(New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1988), p. 42.]*

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*You are downtown, walking around, looking for a place to eat. Your family is with you. The kids are hungry and grumpy. A dirty, disheveled man comes up to you and says, "Hey, can you spare some change so I can get something to eat?" You find him unpleasant – he smells bad – but you give him 50 cents. Five minutes later another man approaches you, mumbling incoherently with his hand out, and then a big, heavy fellow with a deep voice asks for 50 cents so he can buy some coffee.*

*Soon afterwards a young woman, looking strung-out, asks you for a dollar so she can catch the bus home. You don't know whether to believe her or not. You've already given out $1.25 of your hard-earned money, and you don't know how many more people will ask you for change. Your kids are watching you. Finally, you give her a dollar, but say to her, yourself, and your family, "That's it for beggars today!"*

*You feel a little ashamed that you doubted her story – she looked so weak, young, and forlorn – but you also feel like a sucker: "She's probably a drug addict looking for her next fix," you say to yourself. You were a little afraid of the big man. "It's the middle of the day with people all around," you thought. "But some of these guys are crazy."*

*You are frustrated that you must face these unpleasant people and choices when you go downtown. You wonder, "Why don't they do something with all these homeless people? With all the attention they have gotten, why are there still so many of them?"*

---

In the mid-1980s, homelessness burst onto the national scene as a political issue, as rapidly growing numbers of homeless people attracted widespread attention and concern. Initially, the public and the media were sympathetic, especially when it became clear that many entire families were now homeless. These were not the "winos" and "bums" of old who lived on "skid row" and drank cheap wine.

In recent years, however, the interest and sympathy of the public has peaked and waned. Part of this has to do with a growing awareness that many homeless people aren't so easy to sympathize with – many are mentally ill or are addicted to drugs or alcohol. Many Americans now seem tired of this problem which, like the problems of crime and drugs, seems permanent and unsolvable. Whether we like it or not, the homeless are still around. In many cities and towns they are conspicuous, and in some of these places there is a pressing debate over what should be done. And in spite of so-called "compassion fatigue," our nation as a whole continues to grapple with the problem of homelessness.

We have written this brief program to help small groups of concerned people – study circles – discuss homelessness in America. Our purpose is to provide a framework for your discussion so that your study circle feels capable of taking on this difficult issue. We believe that with this discussion guide and a competent leader you can have a productive, enjoyable, and worthwhile discussion.

The question of what society should do about homelessness challenges us to examine some of our most basic beliefs about our society and public policy. Most Americans are familiar with this problem through direct experience with homeless people or through the media. As you share your own knowledge and experiences and listen to others', you may change some of your views on this issue. For example, the opportunity to rethink your beliefs about the causes of

homelessness may change your judgment of what society should do.

The goal of this study circle is not to produce a consensus on "the truth" about homelessness but to allow each person to present his or her own views, consider the range of opinions, and come to an informed judgment about the issue. "Background Information on the Problem of Homelessness" provides a core of basic facts; reading it before the discussion will help prepare you for thinking with others about homelessness.

The central question, "What Should We Do About Homelessness in America?," is divided into two parts for purposes of discussion. To help your group wrestle with the fundamental ethical issues, Part I presents some questions about the nature of society's obligation to the homeless. We hope that you will keep these in mind as you go on to discuss Part II with its four basic approaches to homelessness.

These four approaches describe general perspectives about what American society should do about homelessness:

1) Help only those who are unable to work.
2) Provide the bare minimum of food and shelter to all.
3) Food and shelter are not enough – provide services and training.
4) Ensure that every American has adequate housing.

There is considerable overlap among these approaches; each builds on the previous one and goes beyond it. In addition, each sees the problem of homelessness in somewhat different terms. The fourth approach has larger implications because it goes beyond what some call the "visible homeless" to the many millions of Americans who are not usually thought of as homeless but whose housing situation is grim or precarious.

As you examine these approaches, consider whether each is realistic, practical, and affordable. What are the strengths and weaknesses of each? How does each fit with your beliefs about society's obligation to those in need? Think about your own concerns; listen to the views of others. Then come to your own considered judgment on the issue of homelessness.

If, after your discussion, you wish to take an active role in this issue, you may want to explore some of the suggestions in "What You Can Do About Homelessness." One of the easiest and most important recommendations is that you contact your elected officials. We believe that talking about this issue with others is important in and of itself; by communicating your conclusions to our leaders, you will help advance an important public debate.

# Background Information on the Problem of Homelessness

What does it mean to be homeless? According to the National Coalition for the Homeless:

> Homelessness, broadly defined, means lack of a fixed residence. . . . This includes those people whose primary nighttime residence is a public or private shelter, an emergency housing placement (such as the motels or hotels used by local welfare agencies), or an abandoned building, as well as people living on streets, in parks, transportation terminals, automobiles, or campgrounds.
>
> But being homeless means more than not having a secure place to sleep. Being homeless means having no place to store the things that connect you to your past; it means losing contact with friends and family; it means uprooting your kids from school; it means having to endure the shame of what is still perceived as personal failure. . . . Being homeless means enduring the routine indignities of living on the margins, the frustration of not being able to provide for those who depend on you, the humiliation of having to rely on the kindness of strangers, the anonymity of government assistance. Being homeless means having no center in one's life, no haven to return to, no certainty about tomorrow.

Almost everyone agrees that homelessness in America is a serious problem, one that has been getting worse rather than better. However, there is disagreement about who the homeless are, how many of them there are, why they are homeless, and what we should do about it. At this time of cutbacks in social welfare expenditures, this issue is taking on new importance for many communities across the United States.

**How many homeless people are there in America?**

Homeless people are hard to count. Not only do many of them continually move around within their general area, but many homeless people are suspicious of authorities. While some of the homeless use shelters and seek social services, others avoid such contacts.

The fact that the homeless population is constantly changing also makes it hard to measure. While there is a core group of those who are continually homeless, many people are homeless only temporarily – perhaps because they lost their job, were forced out of their apartment, or had a financial crisis. Some are homeless periodically because personal problems make them unable to manage their lives well enough to keep a stable home.

Because it's so hard to count the homeless population, its size is not clear. Some advocates for the homeless have said there are three million homeless people in America; other studies give a number that is about one-fifth that size, 600,000. Most estimates are between 600,000 and one million.

These estimates do not even include the so-called "invisible homeless," who number in the millions. The "invisible homeless" move from one improvised setting to another, making use of emergency lodging only on rare

**One of the "invisible homeless"**

Anna Lee Rodgers, a 58 year-old widow, lives near a small town in central North Carolina in an old shack. Her home lacks running water and insulation. The only heat is from the oven in her old stove. On cold days during the winter, she moves in with her daughter and son-in-law's family, sitting in the small, crowded kitchen by day and sleeping on the living room sofa by night. She misses her privacy, and her daughter resents her presence, but she has nowhere else to go.

occasion. They live temporarily with friends or relatives under crowded conditions, inhabit a substandard apartment or shack, or move frequently because they can't afford to pay rent regularly. Many are but one paycheck or bad break away from "visible" homelessness. Most often when people think of what society should do about homelessness, they think about the "visible homeless." But those who believe that society should provide decent housing for all often advocate helping the "invisible homeless" as well.

While there are more "invisible" than "visible" homeless people, the visible homeless – people on the street, in shelters, and in welfare hotels – are a more immediate problem and receive more public attention. In this program, when we say "homeless" we are referring to the visible homeless unless we specify otherwise.

**Who are the homeless?**

Just as the homeless are hard to count, they are hard to identify and describe. Precise statistics do not exist, and the homeless population varies from area to area, city to city. For example, in some poor inner-city areas, as many as 75% of homeless people are addicted to drugs or alcohol, but that figure is much lower in suburban areas or in smaller cities.

However, there are some generalizations we can make about who the homeless are. The majority are single men. Homeless single women are less common. About half of homeless women have been victims of domestic violence; the fastest growing segment of the homeless population is women with children. The number of families that are homeless has been on the increase in recent years, and now it is estimated to make up 20-30% of the entire homeless population. While some of these families have serious problems with drugs, alcohol, mental illness, or domestic violence, many homeless families' primary problem is poverty.

Many analysts divide the homeless population into three groups: people with drug and alcohol problems; people with mental illness; and people whose main problem is economic – that is, people who simply do not have the money to rent an apartment. There is significant disagreement about what proportion of the homeless population each of these groups makes up, partly because it is likely that most homeless people would fit into more than one of these categories.

*People with drug and alcohol problems.* People who are addicted to alcohol and drugs make up a large segment of the homeless population. Their proportion has been growing in recent years with the increased use of crack and heroin. Many of these people have lost control of their lives and are no longer able to maintain a home. Some have turned to criminal activities – burglary, prostitution, or drug dealing – to support their habits. Their friends and families have turned their backs on them because they can no longer trust them. Treatment programs are available for only a tiny fraction of those who want them.

*People with mental illness.* Many of the mentally ill homeless were released from state mental hospitals as a result of the policy of deinstitutionalization begun in the early 1960s. The number of patients in state mental

hospitals declined from 505,000 in 1963 to 68,000 in 1990. The second half of this plan was to have created community mental health clinics that would ease the transition of the deinstitutionalized back into society and help them maintain emotional stability. However, the funds for the clinics were seldom allocated as planned, and cuts in federal spending for community mental health programs in the 1980s made a bad situation worse. Many of these former patients from mental hospitals, unable to manage their lives in our complicated society, became homeless. This is a substantial (some say as much as one-third) but declining proportion of the homeless population.

*Poor people.* The third group of homeless people has primarily economic problems. Because they are unable to work, cannot find work, or their wages are too low, they are too poor to rent the apartments that are available. In fact, studies report that 20-25% of homeless people are employed at any given time. But the large amount of start-up money needed to rent many apartments – first month's rent plus a security deposit – is often a problem. This third group also includes people who have lost their leases, for example because of a fire or because a serious illness or accident ruined them financially.

In some cities there are vacant, low-cost apartments and so homelessness is not as serious a problem. In other cities there is little available low-rent housing and not enough public housing (that is, government-owned housing rented out at below market rates). In some cities, the waiting list for a place in public housing is many years long. Largely because the supply of low-cost rental housing has not grown fast enough to keep up with the demand, the number of people who cannot afford to rent available housing has grown significantly in recent years. The growth of this group is the primary reason there are so many more homeless people today than there were ten years ago.

**Why are there so many more homeless people now? What causes homelessness?**

Most analysts agree on the primary reasons that the homeless population has expanded over the past decade: a changing housing supply; increased poverty and unemployment; and increased drug addiction and alcoholism. Which reasons are most important, how they work together, and how to stop the cycle are all areas of disagreement.

A shortage of low-cost rental housing is a major reason for the rise in homelessness. In the 1980s, many inexpensive apartments in cities were renovated or destroyed to make way for more expensive rental units or condominiums. The baby boomers were buying or renting apartments, creating a surge of demand for housing in cities and driving prices up. (Because many baby boomers remained single well into their 30s, the number of households was larger than might have been expected.) As a result, many poor people lost their apartments and could not afford to rent others. Neighborhoods that had been "low-rent" were now upscale, and no housing trickled down to replace the low-cost units.

In addition to the smaller supply of low-rent housing in the '80s, the number of poor people increased due to national economic downturns and changes in the global economy. The combination of these factors added to the numbers of homeless people. During the recessions of the early 1980s and '90s, many people lost (and are losing) their jobs and their homes. Some are not able to find work that pays well enough to support a family. Faced with this situation, some families choose to split up so that the mother and children can qualify for welfare and be able to afford an apartment.

The shortage of low-cost rental housing also affects those who are mentally ill or who have drug and alcohol problems. While

**Single Room Occupancy (SRO) Housing**

In the 1950s, '60s, and '70s, many run-down hotels in downtown areas of big cities were converted to rental housing. Some of the rooms have cooking facilities, some have nothing more than hotplates; some have their own bathrooms, others have shared bathrooms.

This SRO housing is the housing of last resort for people who are just barely able to keep their heads above water economically. A typical resident might be a disabled person or a widowed elderly person on social security, or a single man who has trouble holding a job or cannot find work.

In the 1980s, many SROs were destroyed or redeveloped as more upscale housing took their place. Because many SROs are seedy and their occupants are on the bottom of society, SROs make neighborhoods unattractive. In the process of redeveloping inner city areas, many SROs were destroyed.

The occupants of SROs had nowhere to go. They could not afford to rent apartments, and in most cases the rooms that were destroyed were not replaced. As a result, many who once lived in SROs ended up out on the streets or in homeless shelters. In recent years many cities have realized the crucial role that SROs played as housing of last resort, but in most cases that realization has come too late. Few cities have the money to build new housing, and the federal government has cut back on housing funds.

some cannot hold down jobs or manage their lives, others have been able to function in society, but only barely. With changes in the housing situation, many people on the edge have become homeless. For example, many former psychiatric patients and drug and alcohol users once lived in single room occupancy (SRO) apartments; in recent years this type of housing has largely disappeared.

There is now general agreement that it was a mistake to deinstitutionalize patients from state mental hospitals without assuring that they would be cared for in the community. Another cause of homelessness, alcohol and drug abuse, has its roots in both personal and social problems. There is a special stigma attached to poor people who have these problems; wealthy or middle class people who have drug and alcohol problems are better able to afford treatment and keep their homes. Though we know that drug and alcohol problems are not confined to the homeless, our views on these problems will affect what we see as society's responsibility to this segment of the homeless population. Whether we see addiction as primarily a response to the injustices of society, as a sign of personal weakness, or as a disease will influence our perspectives.

**What has government done to address the problem of homelessness?**

*Direct services.* Most government programs that directly help homeless people are developed on the local level (by cities, towns, and counties) or by the states. Programs include shelters, soup kitchens, and social services such as counseling, education, job training, and health care. State governments often contribute a significant portion of the money to pay for these programs. However, services for the homeless vary greatly from state to state: some do little, while others provide a range of services. Some, like New Jersey, even design initiatives such as homelessness prevention programs.

The federal government's role is primarily to provide funding for programs that are run by the states and local governments. Homeless people are helped by Medicaid, public housing and rental assistance programs, mental health programs, and community development block grants. Some homeless people also receive supplemental social security (aid to disabled people directly from Washington).

*Housing policy.* While state and local governments are the primary providers of direct services for the homeless, the federal

**The McKinney Homeless Assistance Act**

The most prominent programs through which the federal government helps homeless people are based on the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, first passed in 1987. Through this act, the federal government has provided $1.8 billion to support state and local programs ($595 million in 1990). The McKinney Act now provides for 18 different programs that grant funds for emergency and transitional shelters, food programs, education, job training, health care, and mental health care. The programs are administered by the federal department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

government provides most of the funds for housing.

Many poor people are helped by government through public housing or rental assistance. There are other government housing programs as well. Overall, however, direct federal government housing assistance is provided to less than 30% of those households with incomes below the poverty level. Total federal government spending on low-income housing programs was $16 billion in 1990.

Through most of the 1970s, public housing and rental assistance programs grew at a rate that kept pace with the growing need. But in the 1980s the rate of growth of rental assistance programs was slowed and the federal government steadily reduced funds for building public housing – just at a time when the need was increasing dramatically.

Although most analysts agree that right now there is a lack of affordable housing in many American cities and towns, there is intense disagreement about:

- why there is a shortage of affordable housing;
- the extent to which government should be involved in the housing market; and
- how much help the government should provide to homeless people.

**Public housing and rental assistance**

Started in 1937 to provide temporary housing for working class families down on their luck, public housing has become permanent housing for America's poor. Today about 1,340,000 households live in public housing units that are owned and operated by local public housing authorities. Residents pay 30% of their income toward rent, and the federal government pays whatever extra is necessary for building maintenance. (In practice, however, much public housing is poorly maintained.) The typical public housing resident is an elderly retired person living alone or a mother with one or two children.

There are a variety of different federal programs that, taken together, provide rental assistance to about 1,650,000 households. These programs are run by HUD. Usually tenants must pay 30% of their income toward the rent for an apartment that HUD has approved. HUD then pays the difference so that the total equals a "fair market rent" for the area, as determined by HUD which, in practice, is often far below what apartments in that area truly rent for.

The Reagan Administration initiated the use of "vouchers" for some rental assistance programs. A voucher is worth a certain amount of money toward rent. The voucher system allows tenants to choose any apartment (it doesn't have to be approved by HUD), but a tenant using a voucher may have to spend more than 30% of total income on rent. The motivation behind the voucher system is to create a greater demand for low-income housing which, in theory, will create increased incentives to build or remodel low-cost housing. One drawback to this system is that vouchers are still not enough to enable people to rent apartments in areas with a shortage of affordable housing.

The biggest federal housing program does not help low-income renters: the government gives a variety of tax breaks to those who

own their own home. The deduction for interest payments on mortgages, the best known part of this program, cost the federal government about $63 billion in foregone taxes in 1990; 52% of the tax savings went to households who are in the top fifth in income.

**Basic Attitudes About Homelessness**

Some social problems are easy to overlook or ignore. Homelessness is not one of them. Whatever they may think are the reasons for homelessness, most Americans see homeless people as a negative reflection upon our society.

While dealing with homeless people is a local problem, homelessness is also a national issue, and not only because so many cities and towns all over the country have homeless people. Homelessness is a national issue because it raises fundamental questions about fairness in our society, about poverty, about the economy, about the role of government, about the definition of "basic needs," and about society's obligation to the needy.

As a nation we have found it difficult to deal with homelessness. Not only is our society divided on how to treat the homeless, many individuals have conflicting feelings. Deciding how to respond to a homeless person who asks for money is, for many people, difficult and unpleasant. The upturned palm of a miserable-looking person can simultaneously evoke fear, empathy, disgust, anger, shame, compassion, and despair.

Some leaders have said that homelessness is a national disgrace, but others have argued that many of the homeless cannot be helped or do not deserve our help. Some Americans do not believe that housing is a right, while others believe that it is such a basic need that it should be guaranteed for everyone. While many people volunteer in or contribute money to homeless shelters, it is common for a community to oppose placement of low-income housing or a shelter in its own vicinity.

This background section was intended to prepare you for discussion of both the ethical issues wrapped up in homelessness and possible approaches for dealing with it. We hope that participating in the discussion will help you to clarify and articulate your own thoughts about society's obligations to homeless people.

# What Should We Do About Homelessness in America? Part I: Some Ethical Considerations

Before you examine the four broad approaches to homelessness outlined in Part II, we suggest you explore some basic ethical questions concerning our society's obligation to homeless people. These questions are not posed to lead you to the "right answers" but rather to inspire discussion.

**What is society's obligation to homeless people?**

Some argue that our society is so wealthy that none of its members should go without basic needs like food and shelter. According to this argument, the reason that a person cannot afford the basic necessities doesn't matter, morally speaking: society still has the responsibility to make sure that each person has what he or she needs. Therefore, even if someone lacks the initiative to find work, society should still provide food and shelter; to do otherwise would be to deny the right to live. Supporters of this viewpoint may differ in their beliefs about the *level* of society's responsibility.

A second argument says that for those who are able to work the right to receive basic needs should be conditional upon their willingness to work. According to this argument, even though society does have an obligation to guarantee at least the basic necessities of life for all its members, it also has the right to make demands on those who receive help. After all, its affluence comes from the labors of its working members.

A third point of view emphasizes the *opportunities* which America offers – our society provides individuals with the opportunity to work, receive an education, make a living, and improve their circumstances. According to this argument, that should be enough. Those who want to work will take advantage of the opportunities which exist.

Behind this third perspective is the belief that society's obligation to people should be limited. There are two distinct reasons: first, in theory, guaranteeing the basic needs of life is laudable, but in practice such guarantees are no favor to the recipients because they destroy individual initiative, reward laziness, and create dependency; second, in order to provide basic needs to those who don't work, government must levy taxes, which people pay involuntarily. The taxes transfer money from those who work to those who don't and create resentment of poor people.

Some who agree that society's main obligation is to provide opportunity also contend that in reality society has seriously limited the opportunities for many people – through racism, sexism, poverty, and lack of educational opportunities. They would say that society has a long way to go just to assure opportunity for all.

Let's look at some of the basic needs of homeless people and some specific questions about what society should provide:

- *Shelter.* Is shelter – a clean, warm place to sleep – a right? Is society obligated to shelter anyone who is homeless? Is there an obligation to children or to women that is different from the obligation to men? If you believe society should provide shelter for the homeless, then for how long should shelter be provided? And what should be the quality of a shelter's accommodations?

- *Housing.* Is there a right to adequate housing? Is there minimal housing that our society should provide to all people? What is this minimum? For example, is a two-bedroom apartment adequate for a family of six? What are the limits of our society's responsibility?

- *Social services.* Some homeless people don't have the job skills they need to make enough money to rent an apartment. Many homeless people clearly need help if they are to stay off the streets or be able to leave a shelter. Their needs range from psychological counseling to alcohol or drug detoxification to education to job training. These services have one thing in common: they are expensive to provide because they require trained professionals. Does society have an obligation to provide these social services to homeless people? If so, how far does this obligation go and what are its limits?

If you think that society has a responsibility to meet everyone's most basic needs, how would you define a "basic need"? Is it the bare minimum that a person must have in order to physically survive? Or is it the minimum that someone must have in order to thrive physically and emotionally? Is there a minimum level of housing beyond basic shelter that society should provide to all that don't have it?

**Who in society should meet the obligation?**

If assisting homeless people through direct services is a responsibility of society, then who should pay the price? How should the cost be distributed?

Is it fair that services for the homeless vary from community to community and from state to state? Is there a certain level of obligation that all of society should meet, or should the level of services be left up to individual communities or to individual states? Some say that no solution to the problem of housing should be imposed from above; others argue that without national or statewide standards, some communities end up paying more than their "fair share" and that homeless people in communities unwilling to pay end up losing their basic rights.

It is easier to believe that society has an obligation, in the abstract sense, to deal with the problem of homelessness than to be willing to bear the real or perceived costs of a particular solution. "NIMBY," an acronym for "not in my back yard," is used to describe the reluctance of people to locate what they consider to be undesirable facilities in their communities. Nuclear power plants, garbage dumps, toxic waste sites, homeless shelters, and low-income housing have all sparked cries of "NIMBY!" What is the individual's responsibility in terms of the placement of low-income housing or a homeless shelter? Some people carefully choose the neighborhoods they live in. Do we have the right to maintain the character of our neighborhood as we like it? Under what conditions is it justifiable to support the building of shelters and low-income housing in general, but to oppose a project in one's own neighborhood? How would you feel if low-income housing or a homeless shelter were planned for your neighborhood?

# What Should We Do About Homelessness in America? Part II: Four Approaches for Dealing with Homelessness

Below are descriptions of four broad approaches that our society might take toward the problem of homelessness.

In discussing these solutions, it will be helpful to answer two questions:

- How do supporters of each approach perceive the problem of homelessness; that is, what do they regard as its basic cause(s)? Some possibilities include: lack of individual ambition, a weakening economy leading to increased unemployment, lack of affordable housing, lack of social welfare programs to help the poor, the increased abuse of drugs and alcohol, deinstitutionalization of patients from mental hospitals.
- What do supporters of each approach consider society's obligation to homeless people to be?

Do not let these four approaches limit your thinking. We encourage you to articulate other approaches, either original ones or combinations of the ones offered here.

There is considerable overlap among these approaches. Each sees the problem in somewhat different terms, but each approach builds on the previous one and goes beyond it. The fourth approach has larger implications because it would affect the lives of the "invisible homeless" as well.

The four approaches are presented briefly here. Your discussion group should be able to expand on each of these views and come up with examples to support them. Following each of the four approaches are some criticisms. We expect that your group will be able to strengthen some of them as well.

**1) Help only those who are unable to work.**

Society has no responsibility to help homeless people unless they are unable to work due to a physical or mental disability. While children, the elderly, and the infirm deserve society's support, anyone who is capable of working and making a living – no matter what their background or handicap – should be expected to help themselves.

Many of the homeless are in a bad situation through their own personal failings, weakness of character, and laziness. People who are addicted to drugs or alcohol have themselves to blame and should help themselves. Good citizens are tired of being asked for money and hassled by homeless people – almost all of them men – who should be working.

One of the reasons we have so many homeless people (and so many people on welfare) is that our society coddles people who have a hard time in life. Our generosity, while well-intentioned, has the unintentional effect of encouraging people to be lazy and dependent and to feel they are entitled to be supported by others. We do these people a disservice by indulging them and encouraging their weaker side. We would be better off forcing them to "pull themselves up by their own bootstraps," as many working people do.

*Criticisms:*

- This approach blames many innocent victims for problems – lack of low-cost rental housing and unemployment – that are

beyond their control. Some homeless people do work, but the minimum wage is not enough to rent an apartment and support a family in some cities.

• All modern, wealthy nations have accepted the fact that society is responsible for the social welfare of the people, and that those who are less well off deserve help. This is the basis of our Judeo-Christian heritage. This is why we have food stamps, free public education, unemployment insurance, and social security. Isn't housing as important as education?

• Many of the homeless, despite the absence of a diagnosable physical or mental disability, are truly unable to work. They have emotional problems that make them unstable and unreliable. They are not desirable employees. They cannot hold down a job. Why should they be punished with homelessness because of their shortcomings as workers?

**2) Provide the bare minimum of food and shelter to all.**

It is too much to ask that society "solve" the problem of homelessness. The reasons that people become homeless are complex; even if we were willing to spend a lot of money on the problem, it's unclear that we would succeed in solving it.

It is a wealthy society's obligation, however, to ensure that all people, including the homeless, have the minimum of food and shelter. Emergency shelters should exist for temporarily homeless people; long-term dormitory-style shelters should be available to people who are unable to sustain a permanent home. Anybody who is homeless should have access to a shelter.

These shelters should cost as little as possible. They should not be too comfortable. In this way people who can take care of themselves will not want to stay for long, and there will be a strong incentive for shelter residents to acquire jobs, move out, and make their own homes.

*Criticisms:*

• This will provide a free ride at taxpayer expense to many people who can work. Free food and shelter will reward idleness; those who can work should have to work to meet their own needs.

• This approach is likely to lead to permanent government institutions (shelters) for the homeless. This is not an area that the government should be involved in. One shudders to think how badly these human warehouses are likely to be run.

• By providing minimal food and shelter we keep homeless people alive and living on the public dole, but don't give them enough to make them productive citizens. It would be cost-effective, as well as morally right, to provide additional assistance to the residents of shelters so that they can obtain jobs and lead productive lives.

**3) Food and shelter are not enough – provide services and training.**

To become productive members of society, homeless people need a broad range of social services. Society should provide assistance to the homeless in the form of food and shelter, drug and alcohol detoxification programs, counseling and psychiatric treatment, education, and job training. Even providing a mailing address and a telephone would be an enormous help to those who are trying to find work.

Without these services, homeless people will forever be on the margin of society, unemployable, and without control of their lives. Only when homeless people get their lives together will they be able to maintain a home.

Supporters of this approach have different motivations. Some believe that this is most cost-effective. It will be expensive to

provide these social services, but in the final analysis society comes out ahead when people pay taxes, stay off welfare rolls, and stay out of trouble with the law.

A different argument is that we should help homeless people because most are underprivileged and did not have the opportunities that most Americans have. Many of the homeless have been hurt by racism, poverty, sexism, and lack of educational opportunities. Society's failings have contributed to their homelessness, so society should help them to overcome it.

*Criticisms:*

- Many homeless people have such serious problems that they cannot be helped by training or counseling. Many of the homeless are so far gone that they don't *want* to be helped. These programs will waste an enormous amount of money.

- There are many Americans who are not homeless who need many of these services and do not receive them because of the lack of government funding. Should the homeless receive preferential treatment? Can we deny these services to working people if the homeless are receiving them?

- Those communities which offer good services to homeless people will be overwhelmed as homeless people arrive to take advantage of the benefits and training offered. This approach can only be implemented statewide or nationally; but most state governments and Washington are fighting budget deficits.

- Society does not have an obligation to people because they are "underprivileged." There will always be some who have advantages and many who have disadvantages. Many Americans are able to overcome their disadvantages and succeed; the freedom to do so is what makes this country great.

**4) Ensure that every American has adequate housing.**

Everyone in a society as wealthy as ours should have a decent home. It is society's responsibility to provide sufficient funds so that every American is adequately housed. This approach would help the "invisible homeless" as well as people on the street, in shelters, or in welfare hotels; it is the broadest, and would be by far the most expensive of the four approaches.

Last year the federal government gave $63 billion in tax breaks to homeowners (and most of that to those who are well off), but only spent $16 billion on low-income housing programs. Shouldn't we spend at least as much on housing for the poor as we do on housing for the wealthy?

There are significant differences of opinion about how to provide a decent home for all Americans. Some believe that the private housing market could provide affordable housing for all if government interfered less with developers and gave rent subsidies to the deserving poor. Others argue that the private market will never provide enough decent low-income housing: in addition to rent subsidies, government must provide incentives for the housing industry and for private, non-profit housing developers. Supporters of government initiatives believe that in some areas where there is a shortage of housing the government itself must build more low-income housing. But all supporters of this approach agree that every American deserves a decent home and that government must play a major role in providing it.

*Criticisms:*

- This approach calls for enormous new government expenditures at a time when all levels of government are facing serious budget deficits. The HUD scandals and waste in federal programs indicate that such large new expenditures would not be wise.

• A guarantee of housing will remove incentives for people to work and lead to more welfare and indolence. The idea of a "right" to housing causes people to feel that society "owes" them. We should be encouraging people to take responsibility for their own lives and to believe that they can contribute to society.

• If government becomes more involved in housing, it is likely to complicate the housing market and may well make the situation worse.

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**What will it take to implement any one approach?**

If your group comes to a general agreement on what society's approach to the problem of homelessness ought to be, you may want to go one step further and think about ways that society can implement that approach. Your group may decide to meet for a follow-up discussion to examine this issue.

Considering how to implement any approach involves thinking about which institutions in our society are capable of dealing with homelessness and envisioning the practical ways in which that can happen. Since questions about how to achieve goals are related to basic beliefs about the proper roles of government, private enterprise, and the individual, part of the discussion will revisit some of the ethical considerations from "Who in society should meet the obligation?" at the end of Part I.

The following questions can provide a framework for a follow-up discussion on implementing solutions to the problem of homelessness:

*The role of government.* Is government responsible for guaranteeing social welfare? If so, what level of government should bear primary responsibility: local, state, or national? Even if government takes the primary responsibility, do individuals have a responsibility beyond that of providing revenue through taxation?

*The role of the private sector.* Should private, voluntary organizations such as churches, mutual aid societies, charities, social service agencies, and neighborhood groups take the primary responsibility for dealing with homelessness? Many shelters are privately run, although most receive some government support. If the homeless are to be cared for through voluntary action, what is the individual's responsibility to participate and help? What about the argument that voluntary action is not adequate to meet the scope of the problem?

*Public/private cooperative efforts.* Some have suggested that government and the private sector should work together. They argue that public/private partnerships should provide shelters and build low-income housing. In many cities there are partnerships – made up of local and state governments, private non-profit community organizations, private foundations, and businesses – that have successfully built low-income housing. Some say that cooperative action among many types of organizations is the wave of the future since it draws on the assets of several parts of society. Some argue that this makes the provision of basic needs dependent upon local initiatives and resources that will vary greatly from community to community. Another argument against this method is that it is unworkable because it requires the coordination of many different institutions.

*Cost.* Considerations about implementing any approach for dealing with homelessness will begin and end with the important question of who will pay. In many communities across the country social welfare services are being cut. If you believe that society's responsibility to homeless people includes the provision of services that cost money, who should bear the financial burden? Should it

be private individuals, organizations within the community, or government at the local, state, or national levels? How much should we spend to house or shelter the homeless? If you think that government should pay, how much in additional taxes are *you* willing to pay for shelters, housing programs, and social services for the homeless? Are there other publicly funded programs that should be cut to allow for adequate funding to deal with homelessness?

# Supplementary Reading

We reprint here a number of short articles containing background information on homelessness as well as opinion pieces about its causes and potential solutions. Reading these articles will help prepare you for the discussion if you don't know a lot about homelessness. Even if you do, you may find some of the views expressed here provocative.

"Shift in Feelings on the Homeless: Empathy Turns Into Frustration" describes what some have called "compassion fatigue," the weariness and wariness with which many Americans now regard homeless people. This shift in feelings about the homeless is a distinct change from the widespread sympathy and concern expressed in the late 1980s. Part of this shift is due to changing perceptions of homeless people. "Twins of the Streets: Homelessness and Addiction" discusses what one analyst calls "the nasty little secret of the homeless." One personal account of a shift in attitude is recounted in "Brother, Don't Spare a Dime."

The next two articles present contrasting views about the big picture – why has the number of homeless families and individuals been on the rise? In "Homeless: A Product of Policy," Todd Swanstrom points to federal housing policy and government neglect as the primary cause of homelessness. He argues that changes in policy over the past decade have created an inadequate supply of low-cost, affordable housing. The view of William Tucker in "Rent Control as a Cause of Homelessness" is virtually the opposite. It is not government neglect that caused homelessness, he says, but rather the negative impact of government intervention in the housing market in the form of rent control. Your judgments about this issue will affect what you think society's approach to homelessness ought to be.

Finally, we present articles that examine some common community problems and solutions. One of the major obstacles to sheltering and housing homeless people is the widely held attitude of "NIMBY" – not in my back yard. "Watergate Residents Sue to Block Homeless Shelter" tells the story of one community in which a proposal for a shelter is met with direct opposition. "Westchester Town Divided on Housing for the Homeless" relates some of the hopes and fears experienced by members of one community considering the construction of low-income housing.

The concluding two articles herald two of the many successful projects that have created permanent homes for homeless people. "Reclaiming a Wasteland: SRO Housing of Los Angeles" describes what one big city government has done to house the homeless. In "Cambridge Pair Make Homelessness Their Business" we see one example of the many private efforts to build low-income housing for the homeless. These articles suggest how the will to deal with homelessness can be translated into solutions to a difficult problem.

*The New York Times, pg. 1, September 2, 1991*

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# *Shift in Feelings on the Homeless: Empathy Turns Into Frustration*

By ISABEL WILKERSON

Ten years after the wan face of homelessness first captured the nation's attention, empathy is turning to intolerance as cities impose harsher restrictions on homeless people to reduce their visibility or force them to go out on their own.

New York City, Santa Barbara, Calif., and a number of other cities are acting out of both frustration and desperation, pressed by hard times and by a public that has grown increasingly impatient with a problem that has worsened despite the programs aimed at relieving it and previous shows of good will.

"People want to help, but they don't want to feel that they're just being suckers," said Mayor Loni Hancock of Berkeley, Calif. "The cities that try to help get overrun and then comes the backlash. There comes a time when people want to step back and insulate themselves."

Atlanta, which is preparing for the 1996 Olympic Games, passed a law in July authorizing the arrest of anyone loitering in abandoned buildings or engaging in "aggressive panhandling."

New York's transit authority has banned panhandling in the subway system and a $50 fine can be imposed on anyone caught doing so.

In Miami, where officials briefly considered shuffling several hundred homeless people off to a city-owned baseball stadium, panhandlers who approach motorists at intersections to wash car windows face a fine of as much as $500 and a jail sentence of as many as 60 days.

### Tough Stance in Capital

In August, the District of Columbia closed two emergency shelters and announced plans to eliminate half the beds in its shelters. It also plans to severely restrict the number of nights that homeless people can stay in them. The city's tough new stance comes with strong public backing. A 1984 law required the city to shelter all in need; last fall the voters repealed it.

And last year Santa Barbara banned homeless people from sleeping on public streets, beaches or sidewalks and in parking lots; the measure leaves them to sleep on a public lot filled with eucalyptus trees where they are out of sight of downtown boutiques.

Advocates for the homeless and city officials alike see these as signs that attitudes are hardening toward what became a badge of social responsibility in the 1980's when people could better afford to be magnanimous.

"People are a bit weary," said Mary Brosnahan, executive director of the Coalition for the Homeless, a New York group. "They have heard all the solutions for the last 10 years, but it doesn't seem to make a dent in the problem."

The world is a very different place than it was just over a decade ago, when homeless people were swept from Madison Square Garden in New York on the eve of the Democratic National Convention in 1980 in an incident that gave birth to a nationwide advocacy movement. That was before crises like AIDS and crack that compelled for the nation's compassion even had names and before two recessions made life tougher for everybody.

In the early, naive days of the homeless crisis, people pinned their hopes on the legions of soup kitchens and armories-turned-shelters to reduce the number of people sleeping in doorways and soliciting money on street corners. But the numbers only grew.

Now, in the second decade of widespread and obvious homelessness, people are experiencing a kind of compassion fatigue, as Mayor Hancock of Berkeley, calls it.

In that city, where tolerance is a religion, officials have taken steps to keep the homeless from abusing the public's generosity. In July, the city arranged for residents to buy vouchers from local merchants that they can give to homeless people instead of cash, which can all too easily be used for drugs or liquor. The vouchers can be redeemed in local establishments for things like food or laundry service.

No city officials contacted last week would say publicly that they were seeking to push the homeless aside. But all said they were feeling the public's impatience.

### 'The Fad Is Over With'

"In a sense, the fad is over with," said Paul Reiman, acting president of Central Atlanta Progress, a business group that pushed the city to regulate the homeless. "I don't know if it's tolerance or it's, 'Let's just not see it anymore.'"

Statements like those especially disturb advocates. Such sentiments are taken as evidence that the public may be becoming inured to the sight of disheveled people pushing their life's possessions in a shopping cart or washing themselves on the sidewalk.

It is in this new and unforgiving climate that merchants and others are speaking out in ways that would have been considered blasphemous not long ago. At the urging of merchants in Santa Barbara, for example, one downtown plaza is being rebuilt to remove the seats, which they say invite the homeless.

"Our goal is to make things as uncomfortable for them as we can so they can move on," said Pete Gherini, president of the Santa Barbara Chamber of Commerce. "When you look at these characters sitting out in the middle of the day when everybody else is working just to survive, you don't get a lot of sympathy."

Part of the problem, advocates say, is that career panhandlers have capitalized on sympathy for the homeless, confusing the two issues, and the careerists are now hard to distinguish from the downtrodden.

Whether on hustlers or the homeless, the city of Atlanta is bearing down and has made it a crime to solicit money in a way that causes a "reasonable person to fear bodily harm" or to panhandle "in close proximity" to a person who has said no.

### Rules on Begging

"As long as you do it in a respectful way, where you're not threatening folk, it's O.K.," said Thomas Cuffie, an Atlanta City Council member who sponsored the measure.

"But once you go beyond that, badgering folk and making them feel you're going to do something to them if they do not give up some money to you, then that's when the person would have a right to bring a charge against you."

On the tiled sidewalks of downtown Santa Barbara, homeless people with shopping carts and backpacks walk briskly past the palms and bougainvillea, and they tend not to linger in front of the adobe-style storefronts. Many have been arrested for panhandling, public drinking or sleeping on public grounds. They move from one out-of-the-way lot to another at night fearing arrest and they say they feel the tide has turned against them.

"They're trying to run us out of here," said Paul Stellwag, one of the city's homeless. "It's getting worse and worse and worse. I can feel the animosity."

Mr. Stellwag says he believes that the hard time he and others are getting is because of the city's concern for tourism. And he resents it. "I don't give a flying hoot about the damn tourists," he said. "If they tried to help us, we wouldn't be here."

But there is widespread agreement that private generosity would not solve the problem. The main flaw in public policy, advocates say, is that emergency shelters and soup kitchens do nothing about the root causes of homelessness — poverty, lack of affordable housing and a changing economy that has eliminated entire classes of well-paying, low-skilled jobs. While these larger problems have intensified the plight of the disadvantaged, cities have

**After years of aid, frustration at a problem that hasn't gone away.**

tried to keep the patient comfortable, to the dissatisfaction of merchants, residents and advocates.

"What you're seeing is a residual effect of programs often too little too late and often discredited," said Kim Hopper, president of the National Coalition for the Homeless, a Washington-based advocacy group, which is affiliated with several other such groups around the nation. Mr. Hopper was co-author in 1981 of "Private Lives/Public Spaces," considered a seminal study of homelessness. "As long as you see only the surface evidence of failure, you will see the calls for more repressive measures."

There has been perhaps no greater turnabout than in Washington, where Mitch Snyder, a radical advocate for the homeless, helped to give homelessness national prominence as an issue. But a year after his death, and under the pressure of city budget deficits and a public change of heart, there appears to be little room for sympathy.

Over the last few years, says Robert Moss, a Washington resident, his compassion has turned to bitterness over the homeless shelter in his northwest neighborhood.

"There's gotten to be just too many of them in one area," said Mr. Moss, a military officer. "And after awhile, it's hard to feel sorry for them. It's made our neighborhood unlivable."

He and others lobbied the city to shut down the shelter. It was one of the two that were closed in August.

As Ms. Brosnahan, of the New York advocacy group, said: "The problem is just enveloping us. How big a rug are you going to need to sweep them under?"



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*The New York Times, pg. 1, May 22, 1989*

# *Twins of the Streets: Homelessness and Addiction*

By GINA KOLATA

Drug and alcohol abuse have emerged as a major reason for the homelessness of men, women and families, complicating the search for solutions, advocates for the homeless say.

Although not all homeless people are addicts, and poverty and a lack of affordable housing contribute significantly to the problem of homelessness, experts said alcohol and drug addiction can no longer be ignored as a major factor.

"Substance abuse is one of the major issues causing people to be homeless and keeping them homeless," said Irving Shandler, who runs the Diagnostic and Rehabilitation Center in Philadelphia, a private group that provides residences and has worked for 26 years to help people overcome homelessness. He estimated that 75 to 80 percent of homeless men and women are addicts.

Drug and alcohol abuse "is the nasty little secret of the homeless," said Ernest Drucker, an associate professor of social medicine and epidemiology at Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York.

Advocates for the homeless like Robert M. Hayes, director of the National Coalition for the Homeless, a group with headquarters in New York, say they have shied away from discussing the problem of addiction in the past, in part because they feared that the public would lose its sympathy for the homeless. But, he said, "the bottom line is that we have to tell the truth."

Advocates for the homeless say drug or alcohol abuse send people who may have only a fingernold on society into a tailspin. Eventually they deplete their resources, lose their jobs, and alienate friends or family members who cease to want to help. They end up on the streets, destitute and hopelessly addicted. And once they are addicted and homeless, there are few opportunities for drug treatment.

Just as there are no precise data on how many people are homeless, there are none on what percentage of homeless people are addicts. The answers homeless people give to questions about substance abuse can be unreliable.

Like some advocates for the homeless, Tom Taylor, who runs Joshua House in Washington, a residence that helps homeless men rejoin society, estimates that at least 90 percent of the men he sees were addicts. Others, including Peter Smith, director of the Partnership for the Homeless, whose group surveyed political leaders and providers of services for the homeless, estimate that the number for men and women combined is 30 percent to 40 percent. The mentally ill constitute 20 percent to 30 percent of the homeless population, and many of them are also addicts, experts say.

Some experts contend that the reason for the lower estimates is that some advocacy groups fear that if they report high percentages of addicts among the homeless, people will no longer contribute money. Donald Hendrix, the interim executive director of Central City Concerns, a group in Portland, Ore., that helps house homeless people, explained, "If you are trying to raise money, you depend very heavily on the public's perception."

Mr. Hayes said "there is something to that charge," adding that when he is contacted by television news programs or Congressional committees looking at homelessness, "they always want white, middle-class people to interview. They want someone who will be sympathetic to middle America."

When the public contributes money, said Mr. Shandler, "they want to spend it on the deserving homeless — that nice family that worked hard all those years. I'm sure there are some families in that category, but my guess is that a significant number of them have their problems exacerbated by drug or alcohol abuse. You can feel sorry for them without failing to recognize that they may be out there because they have problems."

### Crack Making the Problem Worse

Whatever the number, "addiction is a horrendous problem," among the homeless, Mr. Hayes said. Because of crack, "the homeless population is going up quite dramatically," he said, adding, "I think almost everyone longs for the good old days when they were only dealing with heroin addicts."

Experts who are finding a substantial drug problem among the homeless include Paul Koegel, an anthropologist at the University of California at Los Angeles who interviewed homeless men living on the streets in downtown Los Angeles and found that close to 50 percent were addicts. They also include Kostas Gounis, an anthropologist at Columbia University, who interviewed men arriving at the Franklin Avenue shelter in the South Bronx and found that 75 percent were addicts. Mr. Shandler found that the problem is just as severe among women as among men.

Advocates who work with families find that addiction often puts poor families on the street. For example, John Fullinwider, director of Common Ground, a housing organization in Dallas that works with homeless families, said drug addiction "is a real problem." Often, he said, a poor family becomes homeless because at least one member is an addict and "the economy of the family collapses."

Dr. Peter Laqueur, director for AIDS programs at Wood Hull Hospital in Brooklyn, found when he was working in a federally financed program to help heroin addicts that half of 290 addicts who came to the hospital for other medical problems had no homes.

Mr. Hayes, who is a lawyer, said he is now going to court in several states, including New York, to sue for treatment upon demand for drug addicts. He said he sees drug treatment as at least as important as housing for the homeless.

The lack of low-cost housing, the issue that has gotten the most attention in the politics of homelessness, is still a factor, advocates say, but it too is related to drugs. Mr. Hayes likens the search for low-cost housing to the survival of the fittest. Those who are addicts lose. "In a sense, crack is defining who will be the losers in that Darwinian competition for housing," he said.

### Shelters May Add to Problems

But even when housing is available, no one wants to live near drug addicts, those who work with the homeless are finding. Mr. Hendrix of Central City Concerns said that his group has 600 single room occupancy units but "what we are seeing now is that the people who are coming into our buildings are people we can't house because of behavior problems." Crack abuse, he said, makes them "aggressive and violent."

Experts say that shelters only make the drug problem among the homeless worse. Although shelters are supposed to be drug free, drug use is often open and widespread, say shelter directors and advocates for the homeless. Many shelter residents actually have jobs, but they spend all their money on drugs, these experts say.

Groups that try to help bring people back from homelessness are finding that they must confront the drug problem first. Jack M. White, executive director of the Coalition for the Homeless in Washington, which is not associated with Mr. Hayes's group, said that when he started a residence two years ago to help homeless men find jobs and apartments, he began by simply asking the men not to use drugs or abuse alcohol. Only 5 percent made it through the four-month program. He then decided to institute random urine tests for the residents and staff and to evict anyone using drugs. His success rate is now 75 percent.

The Rev. Jack Pfannenstiel, a Franciscan priest who runs six shelters in Washington for men and women and who also directs McKenna House, a residential program that helps men come back from homelessness, said that when he and two other Franciscans began McKenna House in 1985, they did not fully appreciate the substance abuse problem. They reasoned that homeless men can hardly apply for a job when they have no way of keeping clean, when they have to carry all of their belongings with them everywhere they go, and when they have no telephone number for employers to call. Shelter life was self-perpetuating, they suspected.

"Our initial premise was that if we provide food, shelter and hygiene, the men will be able to help themselves," Father Pfannenstiel said. "We were naive about the drug and alcohol problem."

Within a few months, they learned that "we were able to help the men find jobs, but they would get into the same cycle of financial mismanagement," Father Pfannenstiel said. "The big picture that we missed was that this was tied into the abuse of drugs and alcohol. We learned that sobriety maintenance was the big key."

Now men who come to McKenna House must refrain from using drugs or alcohol for a month before entering. About half of the 400 men who have lived there have permanently rejoined society. Those who have failed, Father Pfannenstiel said, went back to the substance abuse.

He added that a major reason men became addicts again is that they were lonely. Part of breaking addiction is to end all contacts with drug-using friends. Many of these men had no one to turn to and ended up seeing their friends again, joining them eventually in using drugs and becoming homeless once more.

### Drug Programs Are Few

Simply asking most homeless men to solve their addiction problems can be an exercise in futility, advocates for the homeless say.

Gary Blasi, who directs the homelessness project for the Legal Foundation in Los Angeles and who is president-elect of the Coalition for the Homeless, said the drug treatment programs in Los Angeles are "completely ludicrous." He said that there are 50,000 to 100,000 homeless people in Los Angeles County but only 20 to 25 beds available for them in residential treatment programs. "It's as if treatment doesn't exist," he said. "You'd have a better chance of winning the lottery."

Some homeless men have had to commit acts of desperation to get drug treatment. Earl McPherson, a Washington man who started drinking and smoking marijuana when he was 12 years old, found himself addicted to crack and "any mood-altering substance" by the age of 25.

As he found himself becoming unable to function, he lost his job, lost his apartment, sold his car, and moved in with his mother. When his mother finally kicked him out, it was a snowy day and Mr. McPherson said he felt he could fall no lower. He had applied to a residential drug treatment program at D.C. General Hospital, he said, he was in 397th place on the list. So Mr. McPherson camped out in the hospital emergency room for two days.

"I told them I wouldn't go back out there until I got help," he said. "I told them I would kill myself if they did not admit me." He got in.

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# Brother, Don't Spare a Dime

BY L. CHRISTOPHER AWALT

Homeless people are everywhere—on the street, in public buildings, on the evening news and at the corner parking lot. You can hardly step out of your house these days without meeting some haggard character who asks you for a cigarette or begs for "a little change." The homeless are not just constant symbols of wasted lives and failed social programs—they have become a danger to public safety.

What's the root of the homeless problem? Everyone seems to have a scapegoat: advocates of the homeless blame government policy; politicians blame the legal system; the courts blame the bureaucratic infrastructure; the Democrats blame the Republicans; the Republicans, the Democrats. The public blames the economy, drugs, the "poverty cycle" and "the breakdown of society." With all this finger-pointing, the group most responsible for the homeless being the way they are receives the least blame. That group is the homeless themselves.

How can I say this? For the past two years I have worked with the homeless, volunteering at the Salvation Army and at a soup kitchen in Austin, Texas. I have led a weekly chapel service, served food, listened, counseled, given time and money and shared in their struggles. I have seen their response to troubles, and though I'd rather report otherwise, many of them seem to have chosen the lifestyles they lead. They are unwilling to do the things necessary to overcome their circumstances. They must bear the greater part of the blame for their manifold troubles.

The homeless themselves must bear the blame for their manifold troubles

Let me qualify what I just said. Not everyone who finds himself out of a job and in the street is there because he wants to be. Some are victims of tragic circumstances. I met many dignified, capable people during my time working with Austin's homeless: the single father struggling to earn his high-school equivalency and to be a role model for his children; the woman who fled a good job in another city to escape an abusive husband; the well-educated young man who had his world turned upside down by divorce and a layoff. These people deserve every effort to help them back on their feet.

But they're not the real problem. They are usually off the streets and resuming normal lives within a period of weeks or months. Even while "down on their luck," they are responsible citizens, working in the shelters and applying for jobs. They are homeless, true, but only temporarily, because they are eager to reorganize their lives.

For every person temporarily homeless, though, there are many who are chronically so. Whether because of mental illness, alcoholism, poor education, drug addiction or simple laziness, these homeless are content to remain as they are. In many cases they choose the streets. They enjoy the freedom and consider begging a minor inconvenience. They know they can always get a job for a day or two for food, cigarettes and alcohol. The sophisticated among them have learned to use the system for what it's worth and figure that a trip through the welfare line is less trouble than a steady job. In a society that has mastered dodging responsibility, these homeless prefer a life of no responsibility at all.

**Waste of time:** One person I worked with is a good example. He is an older man who has been on the streets for about 10 years. The story of his decline from respectability to alcoholism sounded believable and I wanted to help. After buying him toiletries and giving him clothes, I drove him one night to a Veterans Administration hospital, an hour and a half away, and put him into a detoxification program. I wrote him monthly to check on his progress and attempted to line up a job for him when he got out. Four months into his program, he was thinking and speaking clearly and talking about plans he wanted to make. At five months, he expressed concern over the life he was about to lead. During the sixth month, I called and was told that he had checked himself out and returned home. A month later I found him drunk again, back on the streets.

Was "society" to blame for this man? Hardly. It had provided free medical care, counseling and honest efforts. Was it the fault of the economy? No. This man never gave the economy a chance to solve his problems. The only person who can be blamed for his failure to get off the streets is the man himself. To argue otherwise is a waste of time and compassion.

Those who disagree will claim that my experience is merely anecdotal and that one case does not a policy make. Please don't take my word for it. The next time you see someone advertising that he'll work for food, take him up on it. Offer him a hard day's work for an honest wage, and see if he accepts. If he does, tell him you'll pay weekly, so that he will have to work for an entire week before he sees any money. If he still accepts, offer a permanent job, with taxes withheld and the whole shebang. If he accepts again, hire him. You'll have a fine employee and society will have one less homeless person. My guess is that you won't find many takers. The truly homeless won't stay around past the second question.

So what are the solutions? I will not pretend to give ultimate answers. But whatever policy we decide upon must include some notion of self-reliance and individual responsibility. Simply giving over our parks, our airports and our streets to those who cannot and will not take care of themselves is nothing but a retreat from the problem and allows the public property that we designate for their "use" to fall into disarray. Education, drug and alcohol rehabilitation, treatment for the mentally ill and job training programs are all worthwhile projects, but without requiring some effort and accountability on the part of the homeless for whom these programs are implemented, all these efforts do is break the taxpayer. Unless the homeless are willing to help themselves, there is nothing anyone else can do. Not you. Not me. Not the government. Not anyone.

*Awalt is a writer/editor living in Austin, Texas.*



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# Homeless: A Product of Policy

By Todd Swanstrom

ALBANY

Homelessness has captured the attention of policy makers and citizens across the nation. But the politics of compassion has focused attention on the homeless themselves and not on the causes of their plight.

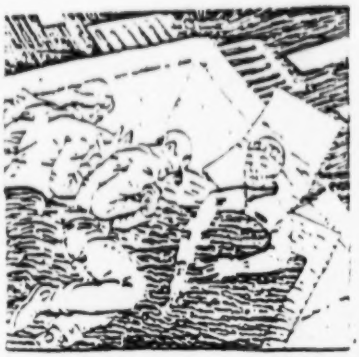
The problem is not to explain why people are poor but to explain why poverty, in the 1980's, has taken the form of homelessness. It simply won't do to claim, as Ronald Reagan did in an interview before leaving office, that most people are homeless by choice. Nor can it be argued that homelessness has been caused by deinstitutionalizing mental patients, since most deinstitutionalization occurred in the late 1960's.

The primary cause of homelessness in the 1980's is an inadequate supply of housing, especially at the bottom of the rental market. And government policy is deeply implicated.

Evidence for the shortage of low income housing abounds. Vacancy rates in New York, San Francisco, and Boston recently have averaged 1 to 2 percent (5 percent is considered normal). Homelessness is only the most visible component of the undersupply problem. In New York City, more than 300,000 people are doubled up with friends and relatives.

Market theory assumes that supply automatically meets demand. But from 1974 to 1983, when low income families were spending more and more on rent, the supply of low rent housing units fell 8 percent.

*Todd Swanstrom is professor of political science at the State University of New York.*



Kelly Alder

Contrary to popular notions, Federal housing policy does not favor low income renters. In 1986, homeowner tax deductions totaled $42.4 billion, with more than 95 percent of the benefits going to those in the upper income range. Meanwhile, funding for housing under the Department of Housing and Urban Development fell two-thirds, from $30.2 billion in 1981 to $10 billion in 1986 — the largest budget cut for a Cabinet-level department in the Reagan Administration.

Between 1981 and 1986, H.U.D.-subsidized housing starts fell from 144,348 to only 17,080 units. The Reagan Administration, instead of subsidizing production of new units, subsidized individuals with vouchers that would supposedly help them find housing on the private market. Jack Kemp, the new Secretary of H.U.D., says he is eager to solve the problem of homelessness; he should, however, avoid a rigid adherence to the Reagan approach, which is unworkable in many metropolitan areas.

Housing vouchers work only if the problem is affordability, not supply. In crowded metropolitan markets, the increasing demand for housing by voucher holders does not address the supply problem and may only result in escalating rents. In New York City, three out of every four vouchers are returned because the holder cannot find an affordable apartment that meets Federal standards.

Why isn't the housing supply responding to increased demand? The reasons are complex, but many have to do with local government policy. Overly stringent and discriminatory building codes, for example, increase quality but unfortunately decrease the supply of low income housing.

The most serious interferences in the market are zoning controls. Some prohibit the construction of multifamily apartments in areas zoned for residential use. Their effect is to prevent the market from responding to the demand for rental housing — especially low income housing.

In order to boost their tax bases, cities often cater to gentrification, disregarding the effects on the supply of low rent housing. White collar professionals in cities have taken many former low income housing units off the market. New York City, for example, has given away billions in tax incentives for housing renabilitation and new construction, but almost all of it has gone for luxury housing. Those tax incentives aided the destruction of the city's single room occupancy units. Since 1970, one million units have been lost nationwide — a major cause of homelessness.

Instead of attacking the causes of homelessness, we are spending billions of dollars on shelters. Building shelters, however, is like putting pots in the living room to catch dripping water without fixing the roof.

Homelessness is caused by a shortage of low rent housing — a shortage that is caused by misguided public policies. We know what needs to be done; what is lacking is the political will to do it.



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*The New York Times, pg. 27, November 14, 1987*

# Rent Control as a Cause of Homelessness

By William Tucker

Not long ago, Seymour Durst, a New York City developer, observed that the city was by no means suffering a shortage of low-income housing. "We've got plenty of low-income housing in New York," he said. "We've just got upper-income people living in it." In posing the city's housing problems that way, he put his finger on what may be the major cause of homelessness — rent controls, which stymie the natural development of the housing market.

Although it has been commonly assumed that unemployment, poverty and Federal cutbacks in public housing are producing the nation's homeless population, none of these arguments has ever really been tested.

All seemed sensible enough during the early 1980's, when unemployment and poverty rates were rising. But poverty and unemployment have since fallen considerably with no visible effects on homelessness.

The argument that blames cutbacks in Federal public housing construction is also tenuous. Critics usually point to the number of new authorizations for public housing units, which fell from 43,000 a year between 1977 and 1981 to 4,000 a year between 1983 and 1986. But public housing construction is a long process. The number of new units added each year has actually risen, from 10,000 annually between 1977 and 1980 to 28,000 in the years 1981 to 1986. If anything, the 1980's have been boom years for public housing.

Recently, in an effort to pinpoint the causes of homelessness, I compared estimates of per capita homeless populations in 50 cities, drawn mostly from a Federal report on the homeless, with various factors that are thought to contribute to homelessness: unemployment and poverty rates, the availability of public housing, annual mean temperature, rental vacancy rates and the presence or absence of rent control.

The results were surprising. There was no correlation between homelessness rates and either high rates of poverty and unemployment or the availability of public housing. That is, I could not say that these factors were pronounced in areas where homelessness rates are high, or negligible where homelessness rates are low.

This certainly does not mean that most homeless people are not poor or unemployed. What it does mean is that the differences in homelessness among cities cannot be explained by looking at these factors.

Weather conditions did make some small difference. Warmer cities have slightly more homelessness — about 3 percent more for each additional degree in annual mean temperature. This could mean that people find it slightly easier to be homeless in warmer cities — or that there has been a certain migration among the homeless toward warmer climates.

Rental vacancy rates show a high correlation. About 15 percent of the difference in homelessness among cities can be explained by differences in rental vacancies — cities with lower vacancy rates having higher homelessness. This suggests that homelessness is not so much an unemployment or poverty problem as a housing problem.

By far the largest correlation, however, was with rent control. There were nine rent-controlled cities in the study: New York City, Yonkers, N.Y., Newark, N.J., Boston, Hartford, Washington, San Francisco, Los Angeles and Santa Monica, Calif. All nine ranked among the top 17 cities for per capita homelessness. Cities with rent controls had, on average, two and a half times as many homeless people as cities without them.

Moreover, further analysis showed that variations in homelessness that seemed to be related to vacancy rates were actually associated with rent control. The nine rent-controlled cities have the nine lowest vacancy rates in the country — all under 3 percent. Meanwhile, only one city without rent control, Worcester, Mass., has a vacancy rate under 4 percent. The variations in vacancy rates among cities without rent controls (from 4 percent in Philadelphia to 18 percent in New Orleans) had no affect on homelessness. Only the difference between cities with rent controls and those without made a significant difference.

From these figures, the following picture of the nation's homeless problem can be drawn. There is a hard core of homeless people in every city — about 3 residents per 1,000. These people — victims of unemployment, poverty, alcoholism, drugs, family break-ups — obviously need help. Truly pathological homelessness does not emerge, however, until cities impose rent control. Then homelessness rises about 250 percent.

This analysis explains a great national paradox: why, at a time when nationwide vacancy rates are at a record 7 percent, so many cities are still confronting a "housing shortage." This shortage is limited almost exclusively to cities with rent control, for obvious reasons. Developers are always wary of building in regulated markets. In addition, "housing gridlock" develops as tenants become reluctant to leave rent-controlled apartments. The result, as economists have long predicted, is a "housing shortage," with the poorest suffering the worst effects.

Over 200 communities, large and small, have adopted rent control since 1970. (Previously, only New York had it.) Most of these cities previously had healthy vacancy rates of 6 to 7 percent. Now their vacancies have fallen below 3 percent and will probably decline further. The homeless populations of the 1980's are very much the result of this process.

*William Tucker is New York correspondent for The American Spectator. A longer version of this article appeared in the National Review.*



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*The Washington Post, Wednesday, January 21, 1990*

# Watergate Residents Sue to Block Homeless Shelter

By David S. Hilzenrath
Washington Post Staff Writer

The owners of the Watergate apartments and other residents of Foggy Bottom have sued the D.C. government to block the placement of a homeless shelter for 108 people across the street from the Watergate.

Residents complained that the planned shelter, to be composed of several trailers at the corner of 27th and I streets NW, would reduce property values in the neighborhood, residents said.

"Nobody's going to want to live here," said Ruby Barnhard, who filed the lawsuit earlier this month along with Betty Zellers, her neighbor; the three Watergate cooperative groups, which represent 629 homeowners; and the Council of Co-Owners of the Plaza Condominium, a 51-unit building at 800 25th St. NW. "It's going to devalue the property in the whole area," Barnhard said.

Units at the Watergate, the luxury complex overlooking the Potomac River near the Kennedy Center, are priced from $179,000 to almost $2.7 million, according to current real estate listings.

The shelter is part of the D.C. government's effort to comply with Initiative 17, which was approved by D.C. voters in 1984 and requires the city to provide overnight shelter for every homeless person who seeks it.

The District has been under a Superior Court order to expand its shelter system since early last year and has been paying daily fines of $11,500 since Dec. 26 for not providing the shelter quickly enough.

A hearing has been set for Friday on the Watergate group's request for a preliminary injunction, which would suspend work on the shelter.

U.S. District Court Judge Oliver Gasch last week rejected the residents' request for a temporary restraining order.

Barnhard, a real estate agent whose town house is adjacent to the shelter site, said the area near her house is already beset with "opportunists" who sit on grates and ask passing motorists for money. "These are the people that we'd like to get rid of," Barnhard said. "We don't need more here."

Watergate residents favored putting the shelter somewhere else partly because the 27th and I streets site is bordered by busy roadways that would pose a hazard to the people who stay at the shelter, said Kerry H. Stowell, president of Watergate East Inc., one of the three Watergate cooperatives.

"It's probably the most dangerous site that I can think of without putting them on a runway at National Airport," Stowell said. "You couldn't put 108 dogs in that area without having the humane society on your back."

Sue Marshall, the homeless coordinator for the D.C. Department of Human Services, said the shelter would affect the Watergate neighborhood no more severely than it would affect other parts of the city.

Marshall said arguments against the shelter are "reprehensible in the sense that what you're doing is comparing a human life to your property value." The District will work to minimize any traffic hazards, she added.

In papers filed in U.S. District Court, David H. Cox, the plaintiffs' lawyer, argued the District should have consulted the federal Commission of Fine Arts before it began to assemble the shelter.

The suit seeks to have the project suspended until it is reviewed by the commission.

Federal law requires the District to seek the commission's advice before authorizing development in certain parts of the city, including the area bordering Rock Creek Park, which is near the shelter.

The presence of the trailers near Rock Creek Park raises aesthetic concerns, said Charles H. Atherton, secretary of the fine arts commission. "It's not exactly what you call a very pleasant thing to look at," he said.

The District argued that the shelter is outside the commission's jurisdiction and that any delay in its establishment "could result in extreme deprivation to the homeless."

The trailers, which are equipped with triple-decker bunk beds, toilets and hot water, are scheduled to open within two weeks.



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*The New York Times, pg. 29, January 23, 1988*

# Westchester Town Divided on Housing for the Homeless

By SARA RIMER
Special to The New York Times

GREENBURGH, N.Y., Jan. 21 — Last week Town Supervisor Tony Veteran called a news conference to announce his support for the construction here of 108 apartments for homeless families — part of a program to build Westchester County's first housing for the homeless.

"I am happy that Greenburgh is in the forefront helping the needy, oppressed and the poor," Mr. Veteran said.

Tonight, the opposition called its first public meeting. Some 700 people from Greenburgh and neighboring Mount Pleasant packed a high-school auditorium.

"I am absolutely committed to helping the homeless," said one of the leaders of the opposition, Burton Siegel. "But I don't want something jammed down my throat."

Mr. Siegel and the others who spoke during the two-hour meeting said Greenburgh had already done far more than its share to help the poor. They expressed fears about the new housing and the people who would live in it, ranging from drugs to the children of those families attending their schools. (The children will be bused to schools in the towns where they came from.)

### Resistance to Housing

The arguments were not new. County Executive Andrew O'Rourke's attempts to build housing for a growing homeless population — the largest in the state, outside of New York City — have been steadfastly resisted by the cities and towns of Westchester.

Under state law, the county can donate land for housing, but it cannot build. But last week, for the first time, the county had won support for a plan to build 200 apartments from three municipalities — White Plains and Mount Vernon, which will allow 50 units apiece, and Greenburgh. The housing, which would include recreation areas and such services as day care and job-training, would be the second project undertaken by the Homeless Emergency Leverage Program, Inc., a nonprofit group founded by Andrew Cuomo, the Governor's son.

"This is the first time that the leadership of local towns have come forward and said, 'Okay, we'll build,' " Mr. Cuomo said yesterday.

The apartments are intended as transitional housing for the homeless. After 10 years, they are to be turned over to the municipalities for senior citizens or others in need of affordable housing.

"All people want is an opportunity and a ray of hope," Mr. Veteran said. "I believe that if all people could work and have clean, affordable housing, you wouldn't have any wars."

Susan Tolchin, the Town Clerk, listened intently as the 71-year-old Mr. Veteran talked exuberantly about the project.

"Tony's global," she said.

Mr. Veteran, a Democrat whose heroes include Harry Truman, Abraham Lincoln and Mario Cuomo, a former high school principal and former mayor of Tarrytown who is in his eighth term as Supervisor of this town of about 85,000. He is proud of Greenburgh's reputation for being more enlightened in its social service policies than many other Westchester towns.

"You've got to give people something," he said. "You've got to make them feel needed."

In the late 1960's and early 1970's, after urban renewal had leveled an entire neighborhood that had been home to much of the town's poor and minority population, Greenburgh was one of the first communities to build low-rise, low-income housing on scattered sites.

In the face of bitter opposition, the town, then under a Republican administration, built 115 apartments on six sites in white neighborhoods, in addition to a public housing project for 131 families. The opposition has since faded, and the scattered site housing is well-maintained and has an extremely low turnover among its residents.

### 'A Site From Heaven'

Mr. Veteran kept open a day-care center that was in danger of being sold to private developers. He turned the Scarsdale Bath and Tennis Club into a public park, and built an indoor pool and community center. Any resident who cannot afford the admission fees can use the parks and pools without charge.

Mr. Veteran began a whirlwind tour of Greenburgh at the 30-acre wooded site, on county-owned land near Westchester Community College, where the housing for the homeless is to be built. On one side is a cemetery, on the other a country club. The nearest houses are some 400 feet away.

"This is a site from heaven," Mr. Veteran said.

"Here's the community college. They can take all kinds of courses. They're only limited by their own initiative."

### An Informal Vote

Westchester County's homeless population has been estimated at about 4,000, most of them families. Many of them have been living in motels, their children often forced to travel long distances on buses to schools in other towns.

Mr. Veteran said the four-member town council has already voted informally to accept the housing. He said that the hundreds of residents who attended a Martin Luther King Day breakfast this week applauded his announcement of the housing.

Mr. Cuomo said he would like to begin building before the end of the year.

But Mr. Siegel and the members of the newly formed opposition have vowed to fight to the end. At tonight's meeting, there was talk of hiring a lawyer.

"I am concerned we're going to be overwhelmed," said Bennet Silverman, a Greenburgh resident who attended the meeting.

Like many others, Mr. Silverman agreed that the homeless need help — but not 108 apartments in Greenburgh. "It's a real problem — what do you do with the homeless?"

Mr. Veteran said he was disappointed by the sentiments expressed at the meeting. "I'm not dumping 200 wild tigers or lions in that area that are going to eat them," he said. "These are people. The good Lord said, 'What you do for the least of my brethren, you do for me.' "



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NOTES FROM THE FIELD **PROFILE**

# Reclaiming a Wasteland: SRO Housing of Los Angeles

Signs of blight are everywhere: abandoned buildings, vacant lots, scores of homeless men and women sleeping on sidewalks. This is the Central City East section of Los Angeles, known to residents as "The Nickel" (because Fifth Avenue is its main thoroughfare) and to everyone else as "Skid Row." Smack in the middle of this rough neighborhood are a cluster of neat, well-run SRO hotels, havens of light in a burned out land.

In all, there are twelve such hotels in Central City East, currently housing over a thousand people. They are owned and operated by the SRO Housing Corporation, a non-profit set up in 1984 under the auspices of the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) of the City of Los Angeles. SRO and CRA have forged one of the most effective public/private partnerships for housing in the nation.

Five of SRO's hotels serve populations with special needs: two for indigent men, one for the elderly, one for recovering alcoholics, and one for the stabilized, chronic mentally ill. SRO soon found that it needed to do more than simply give them a place to sleep. It now provides case management services for the elderly at one site, congregate meals at two sites, and a veterans job training and placement service. To create a nicer environment outside as well as in and to help secure the neighborhood, SRO has also taken over the management of two city parks.

The result: people that society forgot now live in attractive, well-maintained buildings, near a beautiful park full of life and free of fear--all of this enclosed on four sides by some of the meanest streets in LA.

How has SRO done it? Executive Director Andy Raubeson says the most important factor is that SRO has "the support of the city. It starts with the political will to serve the poorest citizens. This is a firm policy of Mayor Bradley and of the CRA." The city has provided $19 million in loans for purchasing and renovation with generous repayment provisions--beginning after five years at 3% simple interest paid out of residual rent receipts. Since SRO is run as a break-even business Raubeson doesn't expect to pay back the loans.

[In a related story, on August 29, the Los Angeles City Council banned demolition of any of the 75 SROs on Skid Row and severely restricted their demolition in other neighborhoods.]

Next, SRO has invested in quality building materials. When SRO renovates a building, it replaces all major systems, raises bathroom floors and drains, installs ceramic tiles instead of vinyl, and buys the best room fixtures available. As Raubeson points out, the investment pays for itself over time, with lower maintenance and replacement costs.

Also, a vigilant management is critical. Problems are resolved as quickly as possible.

The final element for success is a rigorous tenant selection process. A tenant selection committee, consisting of Raubeson, SRO's Director of Housing, and the hotel manager, checks job and landlord references and interviews all applicants. Typically it rejects up to eight applicants for each one it accepts.

*SRO Executive Director Andy Raubeson, LA Mayor Tom Bradley, and SRO Board Chairman James Woods celebrate the opening of the Harold Hotel in October 1987.*

And once people move in, they must comply with some strict rules and regulations. "We have a management style that doesn't tolerate aberrent behavior," says Raubeson. Drug use is strictly forbidden. If recovering alcoholics slip off the wagon they're evicted, but are assisted in gaining treatment and have the right to return if they successfully complete that treatment. Raubeson believes people can change, but "they have to have something to lose to compel them to go along with something they don't like."

SRO residents have a lot to lose. The accommodations are simple but clean and attractive. Says Harold Hotel resident Barbara, admiring her new apartment, "I've never lived like this in my entire life." Over fifty present and past residents are now working for the 93-person SRO Housing Corporation, in housing management, building maintenance, or park supervision.

Raubeson is not sanguine about the future. He admits the challenges that remain are "huge." Still, he surveys what SRO has accomplished in the last five years with pride. "We've created a sense of community in the lives of people who have long lacked any positive connection to others. One of the most important aspects of SRO living is the opportunity for socialization as opposed to the isolation that is often present in more traditional housing, particularly housing for the elderly."

SRO's greatest achievement is not the restoration of a desperate part of the city; it is the restoration of dignity and worth to more than a thousand lives. -RW

Reprinted from the September, 1989, issue of the Roundup, a publication of the Low Income Housing Information Service.

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*The Boston Globe, Friday, April 5, 1991*

# Cambridge pair make homelessness their business

By Linda Matchan
GLOBE STAFF

CAMBRIDGE – Two Cambridge activists with previous experience as arts promoters are taking an innovative approach to finding housing for the homeless.

"We call ourselves entrepreneurs for the poor," said Philip Mangano, a former music manager in Los Angeles, and now the development director for the housing and homeless program of St. Paul's African Methodist Episcopal Church.

Mangano and Linsey Lee, a former production assistant for the noted Merchant and Ivory filmmaking team and now the church's resource coordinator, are applying the entrepreneurial instincts they cultivated as arts producers to the job of developing family housing.

"It's not that different from film production research," said Lee, who functions as a general contractor, of sorts, on behalf of the homeless. She combs the community for donors who will give their time, materials or money to convert church-owned property into housing for families who might otherwise be dispersed to welfare hotels or forced to double up with friends or family. There are an estimated 200 homeless families in Cambridge, double last year's number, said Mangano, former head of emergency services for the city and a onetime seminarian.

Lee described their work as "a treasure hunt into the community." It has been very productive. In the last two years, they have used pro bono services to renovate two dilapidated church-owned buildings in Central Square – a parsonage and an office building – into attractive temporary housing for 14 families.

Now they are renovating a former dormitory owned by the church, and planning construction of a building that would provide permanent, affordable housing for six families.

"We start with zero and knock on every door," said Lee, who has tapped sources ranging from Masse Hardware in Cambridge, which donated paint supplies, to her friend, singer/songwriter James Taylor, who gave a benefit concert in 1988 at Harvard Stadium that raised $250,000.

The doors are almost always opened. "One of things that is so exciting is the wonderful response and generosity of the community," said Lee, who also worked for the city's department of emergency services before coming to St. Paul's, a 120-year-old Central Square church with a longtime commitment to aiding the disenfranchised. "It is amazing how willing people are to help and how generous they are, especially in these hard economic times."

Students in the preservation class at the North Bennet Street School, a North End industrial school, have made the door and window casings for the most recently renovated building, carefully recreating the detail of the turn-of-the-century design. Kennedy and Rossi Construction Co. in Arlington has donated materials and located subcontractors who would contribute flooring, doors and other supplies.

Students at Wentworth Institute of Technology have worked on the moldings and baseboards. Several churches in the Boston area have contributed furniture and financial support. Kennedy Studios has offered pictures for the walls. Toscanini's Ice Cream has donated ice cream to the volunteer workers, who have included young adults from the City Year program, a kind of urban Peace Corps.

Mark Rogovin of Rock Steady Builders, a Boston construction worker, said he has helped out "between jobs" because he supports the work being done by the church.

"I'm like a Boy Scout. I'll earn my wings in heaven this way," Rogovin said one day recently as he put tile on a bathroom wall.

While it is not uncommon for advocacy groups to enlist voluntary help to prepare housing for the homeless, Mangano thinks few have relied so heavily on the community. A full 75 percent of the cost of St. Paul's renovation projects has been covered by free services, he said; the rest has come mostly from state and federal grants.

Mangano thinks the program's success illustrates that there are business people, organizations and individuals who are "looking for ways to be part of the solution" to the problem of homelessness, and that what is urgently needed in big cities is "creative thinking" and "entrepreneurial spirit."

"Our longterm goal," he said, is "to develop a portfolio of properties for the poor."

"The critical thing is to be sure that we do not start viewing the homelessness problem as intractable," he said. "There is a danger that society will institutionalize a certain response – namely, shelters – and the last thing we want to see happen is that shelters are deemed to be the proper societal response.

"The entrepreneurial spirit brings to this the belief that this is a solvable problem. We need creative thinking matched up with hard resources. This is finite enough to have a solution to it."

Mangano thinks churches and synagogues have a tremendous capacity to mobilize the community.

"Who represents the poor, other than faith communities?" Mangano said. "Churches are the natural constituencies for the poor. If they don't help, the poor will be unrepresented."



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# What You Can Do About Homelessness

If, after your discussion, you are interested in learning more about homelessness or helping homeless people, there are a variety of steps you can take:

*Continue talking about homelessness with others.* Raise the issue in an organization or group of which you are a member. Organize another study circle on homelessness with family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, or other people you know. One helpful resource might be *Choices: A Study Circle on Homelessness and Affordable Housing.* Developed in early 1990 by the Topsfield Foundation, this 146-page, 4-session discussion program is based on articles from a variety of publications. It is available from SCRC for $5. Another resource for discussing homelessness, *Housing and Homelessness: A Teaching Guide*, is published and prepared by HOUSING NOW, 425 Second Street NW, Washington, DC 20001. It is specifically designed for classroom use and contains lesson plans for grades 4-8 and 8-12.

Find out more about what's going on in your community. Read articles in your local paper or contact shelters and organizations that work with homeless people to find out more about the problem in your area. Local churches are often involved.

*Learn more about the issue.* A number of national organizations that can provide information are listed on the next page.

*Contribute money* to a homeless shelter, food pantry, or to an organization that advocates a solution to homelessness that you support.

*Volunteer* at a homeless shelter or soup kitchen or for an organization that works on the issue of homelessness. Many local social service agencies provide counseling, tutoring, job training, and other services to help homeless people attain independence and stability. These organizations almost always need volunteers and contributions.

*Contact your elected officials.* Local, state, and federal officials are all involved in making or implementing policies that affect homeless people. Elected officials are often a good source of information. Tell your elected officials that you are concerned about homelessness, and ask them what they are doing about it. Suggest that they take a leadership role on the issue. If you favor a particular approach or policy, ask them to support it.

*Publicize the issue* in your community by writing a letter to the editor of your local newspaper, organizing a forum or public program about homelessness, or contacting other organizations and urging them to become involved in the issue.

*Join an organization that works on homelessness.* This could be a local group in your city or town, a statewide coalition, or a large national organization. You will find the names and addresses of a few national organizations below. To contact an organization that works on homelessness in your area or in your state, call the National Coalition for the Homeless.

*Help organizations that build housing for the homeless.* There is an increasing number of private organizations, many of them church-based, that have become involved in building low-income housing for people who are at-risk of becoming homeless or who are living in shelters or welfare hotels. Many of these private organizations work with large foundations or with government to develop innovative ways to build housing.

The following national organizations work at finding solutions to the problem of homelessness or can provide information about homelessness:

Children's Defense Fund
122 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20001
(202) 628-8787

Habitat for Humanity International
121 Habitat Street
Americus, GA 31709-3498
(912) 924-6935

The Heritage Foundation *
214 Massachusetts Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20002
(202) 546-4400

Interagency Council on the Homeless
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
451 Seventh Street, Room #18158
Washington, DC 20410
(202) 708-1480

National Alliance to End Homelessness
1518 K Street NW, Suite 206
Washington, DC 20005
(202) 638-1526

National Coalition for the Homeless
1621 Connecticut Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20009
(202) 265-2371

National Low Income Housing Coalition/
Low Income Housing Information Service
1012 14th Street NW, Suite 1500
Washington, DC 20005
(202) 682-4114

National Resource Center on Homelessness and Mental Illness
c/o Policy Research Associates, Inc.
262 Delaware Ave.
Delmar, NY 12054
(800) 444-7415

National Student Campaign Against Hunger and Homelessness
29 Temple Place
Boston, MA 02111
(617) 292-4823

* The Heritage Foundation is the only organization listed here that does not have housing or homelessness as its primary focus.

# Suggestions for Leading Homelessness in America: What Should We Do?

All discussion groups are different. The participants, the dynamics of your particular group, and the nature of the subject at hand make this so. The following suggestions are not intended to be definitive, but rather to offer general guidelines to help structure a discussion using this material.

The aim of small-group discussion is for participants to learn from each other. The leader's job is to create an atmosphere respectful of all feelings and to challenge the participants to go beyond their individual opinions and consider alternative points of view. While people cannot believe something they consider to be false, they must be willing to entertain the possibility that some of their beliefs are, in fact, false.

**Preparing for the discussion**

"A Framework for Discussion" will give you a sense of how the issue is presented in this material. You should read the rest of the participants' materials carefully. General advice for leading a discussion is offered in "Leading a Study Circle."

**Explaining the ground rules**

Begin by asking participants to introduce themselves and to say why they came. Make sure that everyone understands what a study circle is and what's expected of participants. You may wish to say something like the following: "My role is to assist in keeping discussion focused and moving along. Your role is to share your concerns and beliefs. You should be willing to examine your own beliefs in light of what others say, and that will require carefully listening to others."

**Introductions and starting the discussion**

In order to give the group a sense of focus, you may wish to lay out a general plan for how the two-hour session will proceed:

1) a brief discussion of participants' personal concerns about the issue;
2) a discussion of ethical considerations (Part I);
3) a critical examination and discussion of the four different approaches to homelessness that are presented (Part II);
4) a wrap-up including a few minutes for participants to complete the "Follow-up Form."

To involve participants at the start of the discussion, you might give them an opportunity to talk about their own experiences by asking one of the following questions:

- What is your personal connection to homelessness?
- Is homelessness a problem in your community?
- How do you feel about homeless people?
- What personal experience have you had with those who are homeless?
- Do the stories from the discussion material relate to anything you have encountered in your community? (The way that welfare is distributed varies from state to state. For example, the story about Annie Harrington from Jonathan Kozol's book makes reference to a specific set housing allowance. Not all states separate housing allowances from other welfare payments; participants may be knowledgeable about how the social welfare system works in your state, or

may become motivated to gain this knowledge.)

**Part I: Some Ethical Considerations**

Engage the group in a free-wheeling discussion about society's obligation to the homeless. Questions presented in the participants' material should stimulate consideration of some basic questions about our society. This will prepare participants to think in a more thoughtful and systematic way about our society's approach to the homeless as presented in the four general approaches that follow.

**Part II: Four Approaches for Dealing with Homelessness**

Your initial aim in discussing the four approaches to homelessness is to help the group understand the essence of each before they go on to debate their relative merits. One way to introduce the material is to take each approach in turn and ask a participant to volunteer to defend it to the group, even if it is not what that participant believes. Looking for the strongest points in each approach can lead to creative re-examination of long-held beliefs and a new appreciation of others' beliefs. Role playing can set a tone of openness and encourage the group to consider unpopular opinions. At this stage of the discussion, other participants may ask questions to clarify the approaches, but debate should wait until all four positions have been presented.

Next, ask participants to say what they actually believe about the four approaches, and why they believe what they do. What in their experience, or what beliefs, lead them to support the position that they take? Each participant should feel comfortable expressing his or her views, no matter what views the others in the group have expressed. Your questions should assist the members in thinking about the strengths and weaknesses of each position, and in thinking about the possible implications of each position. When possible, use questions to help participants clarify their own views. Encourage group members to question each other in a helpful way.

Reaching consensus should not be the goal of the discussion. Disagreement is likely to be more constructive, however, when you help the group see any important areas of agreement. An important part of the leader's role is to help the group identify and articulate whatever common ground exists.

**Closing the discussion**

You might close the discussion by asking whether anyone's views have changed or become more clear to them during the course of the discussion. Those who came into the discussion without a clear stand and who may have been quiet up until this point can be brought into the conversation in this way.

If most of the people in your group agree on what society's approach to homelessness ought to be, you might wish to meet for a follow-up session to discuss some practical ways to implement that approach. If so, this would be a good time to set up that meeting. Also, encourage participants to fill out the "Follow-up Form."

Since policymakers at all levels must deal with the issue of homelessness, encourage participants to communicate their views to their local elected officials and to their representatives in the state legislature and in the U.S. Congress. Make sure that you have handy the names and addresses of legislators to give to participants.

# Leading a Study Circle

The study circle leader is the most important person in determining its success or failure. It is the leader's responsibility to moderate the discussion by asking questions, identifying key points, and managing the group process. While doing all this, the leader must be friendly, understanding, and supportive.

The leader does not need to be an expert. However, thorough familiarity with the reading material and previous reflection about the directions in which the discussion might go will make the leader more effective and more comfortable in this important role.

The most difficult aspects of leading discussion groups include keeping discussion focused, handling aggressive participants, and keeping one's own ego at bay. A background of leading small group discussions or meetings is helpful. The following suggestions and principles of group leadership will be useful even for experienced leaders.

• **"Beginning is half," says an old Chinese proverb.** Set a friendly and relaxed atmosphere from the start. A quick review of the suggestions for participants will help ensure that everyone understands the ground rules for the discussion.

• **Be an active listener.** You will need to truly hear and understand what people say if you are to guide the discussion effectively. Listening carefully will set a good example for participants and will alert you to potential conflicts.

• **Stay neutral and be cautious about expressing your own values.** As the leader, you have considerable power with the group. That power should be used only for the purpose of furthering the discussion and not for establishing the correctness of a particular viewpoint.

• **Utilize open-ended questions.** Questions such as, "What other possibilities have we not yet considered?" will encourage discussion rather than elicit short, specific answers and are especially helpful for drawing out quiet members of the group.

• **Draw out quiet participants.** Do not allow anyone to sit quietly or to be forgotten by the group. Create an opportunity for each participant to contribute. The more you know about each person in the group, the easier this will be.

• **Don't be afraid of pauses and silences.** People need time to think and reflect. Sometimes silence will help someone build up the courage to make a valuable point. Leaders who tend to be impatient may find it helpful to count silently to 10 after asking a question.

• **Do not allow the group to make you the expert or "answer person."** You should not play the role of final arbiter. Let the participants decide what they believe. Allow group members to correct each other when a mistake is made.

• **Don't always be the one to respond to comments and questions.** Encourage interaction among the group. Participants should be conversing with each other, not just with the leader. Questions or comments that are directed at the leader can often be deflected to another member of the group.

• **Don't allow the group to get hung up on unprovable "facts" or assertions.** Disagreements about basic facts are common for con

troversial issues. If there is debate over a fact or figure, ask the group if that fact is relevant to the discussion. In some cases, it is best to leave the disagreement unresolved and move on.

• **Do not allow the aggressive, talkative person or faction to dominate.** Doing so is a sure recipe for failure. One of the most difficult aspects of leading a discussion is restraining domineering participants. Don't let people call out and gain control of the floor. If you allow this to happen the aggressive will dominate, you may lose control, and the more polite people will become angry and frustrated.

• **Use conflict productively and don't allow participants to personalize their disagreements.** Do not avoid conflict, but try to keep discussion focused on the point at hand. Since everyone's opinion is important in a study circle, participants should feel safe saying what they really think – even if it's unpopular.

• **Synthesize or summarize the discussion occasionally.** It is helpful to consolidate related ideas to provide a solid base for the discussion to build upon.

• **Ask hard questions.** Don't allow the discussion to simply confirm old assumptions. Avoid following any "line," and encourage participants to re-examine their assumptions. Call attention to points of view that have not been mentioned or seriously considered, whether you agree with them or not.

• **Don't worry about attaining consensus.** It's good for the study circle to have a sense of where participants stand, but it's not necessary to achieve consensus. In some cases a group will be split; there's no need to hammer out agreement.

• **Close the session with a brief question that each participant may respond to in turn.** This will help them review their progress in the meeting and give a sense of closure.

# Suggestions for Participants

The goal of a study circle is not to learn a lot of facts, or to attain group consensus, but rather to deepen each person's understanding of the issue. This can occur in a focused discussion when people exchange views freely and consider a variety of viewpoints. The process – democratic discussion among equals – is as important as the content.

The following points are intended to help you make the most of your study circle experience and to suggest ways in which you can help the group.

• **Listen carefully to others.** Make sure you are giving everyone the chance to speak.

• **Maintain an open mind.** You don't score points by rigidly sticking to your early statements. Feel free to explore ideas that you have rejected or failed to consider in the past.

• **Strive to understand the position of those who disagree with you.** Your own knowledge is not complete until you understand other participants' points of view and why they feel the way they do. It is important to respect people who disagree with you; they have reasons for their beliefs. You should be able to make a good case for positions you disagree with. This level of comprehension and empathy will make you a much better advocate for whatever position you come to.

• **Help keep the discussion on track.** Make sure your remarks are relevant; if necessary, explain how your points are related to the discussion. Try to make your points while they are pertinent.

• **Speak your mind freely, but don't monopolize the discussion.** If you tend to talk a lot in groups, leave room for quieter people. Be aware that some people may want to speak but are intimidated by more assertive people.

• **Address your remarks to the group rather than the leader.** Feel free to address your remarks to a particular participant, especially one who has not been heard from or who you think may have special insight. Don't hesitate to question other participants to learn more about their ideas.

• **Communicate your needs to the leader.** The leader is responsible for guiding the discussion, summarizing key ideas, and soliciting clarification of unclear points, but he/she may need advice on when this is necessary. Chances are you are not alone when you don't understand what someone has said.

• **Value your own experience and opinions.** Everyone in the group, including you, has unique knowledge and experience; this variety makes the discussion an interesting learning experience for all. Don't feel pressured to speak, but realize that failing to speak means robbing the group of your wisdom.

• **Engage in friendly disagreement.** Differences can invigorate the group, especially when it is relatively homogeneous on the surface. Don't hesitate to challenge ideas you disagree with. Don't be afraid to play devil's advocate, but don't go overboard. If the discussion becomes heated, ask yourself and others whether reason or emotion is running the show.

• **Remember that humor and a pleasant manner can go far in helping you make your points.** A belligerent attitude may prevent acceptance of your assertions. Be aware of how your body language can close you off from the group.



Study Circles Resource Center • PO Box 203 • Pomfret, CT 06258 • (203) 928-2616

# Follow-up Form

Please take a few minutes to complete and return this follow-up form. Your answers will help us improve the Public Talk Series material and make it a more valuable resource.

1) Did you use *Homelessness in America*? ___ yes ___ no
If so, how? (check all that apply)
___ in a discussion group ___ for reference or research material ___ for lecture or classroom use

2) What did you think of the program?

| | very good | | | | poor |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| content | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| format | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| balance, fairness | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| suggestions for leaders | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| suggestions for participants | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| supplemental readings | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

3) Please answer the following if you held or were part of a discussion group.

Your role was ___ the organizer ___ the discussion leader ___ a participant

What was the sponsoring organization (if any)? _____

How many attended? _____

Where was the program held? city _____ state _____

How many times did your group meet to discuss this topic? ___

Participants in this discussion group (check all that apply)
___ came together just for this discussion
___ hold discussions regularly
___ meet regularly, but not usually for issue-oriented discussion

Would you use study circles again? ____ yes ____ no

4) What future topics would you like to see in SCRC's Public Talk Series?

5) Other comments?

Name _____

Organization _____

Address _____

_____

_____

Phone _____



**Please return to the Study Circles Resource Center, PO Box 203, Pomfret, CT 06258**
**or FAX to (203) 928-3713.**
**See reverse side for information on other Public Talk Series programs.**

# Public Talk Series Programs and Other Resources Available from the Study Circles Resource Center

Publications of the Study Circles Resource Center (SCRC) include topical discussion programs; training material for study circle organizers, leaders, and writers; a quarterly newsletter; a clearinghouse list of study circle material developed by a variety of organizations; and a bibliography on study circles, collaborative learning, and participatory democracy. Prices for topical programs are noted below. (You are welcome to order single copies and then photocopy as necessary for your group.) Other resources from SCRC are free of charge.

## Topical discussion programs

(prices are noted below)

**Comprehensive discussion guides**

___ *Can't We All Just Get Along? A Manual for Discussion Programs on Racism and Race Relations* - $3.00

___ Election Year Discussion Set - $5.00
- *The Health Care Crisis in America*
- *Welfare Reform: What Should We Do for Our Nation's Poor?*
- *Revitalizing America's Economy for the 21st Century*
- *The Role of the United States in a Changing World*

**Public Talk Series programs** - $2.00 each

___ 203 - *Revitalizing America's Economy for the 21st Century*
___ 401 - *The Health Care Crisis in America*
___ 501 - *Homelessness in America: What Should We Do?*
___ 302 - *The Right to Die*
___ 301 - *The Death Penalty*
___ 304 - *Welfare Reform: What Should We Do for Our Nation's Poor?*
___ 202 - *American Society and Economic Policy: What Should Our Goals Be?*
___ 303 - *Are There Reasonable Grounds for War?*
___ 106 - *Global Environmental Problems: Implications for U.S. Policy Choices* *
___ 105 - *Facing a Disintegrated Soviet Union* *
___ 107 - *The Arab-Israeli Conflict: Looking for a Lasting Peace* *
___ 104 - *The Role of the United States in a Changing World* *

* based on material developed by the Choices for the 21st Century Education Project of the Center for Foreign Policy Development at Brown University

## Other resources from the Study Circles Resource Center

(available at no charge)

**Pamphlets**

___ "An Introduction to Study Circles" (20 pp.)
___ "Guidelines for Organizing and Leading a Study Circle" (32 pp.)
___ "Guidelines for Developing Study Circle Course Material" (32 pp.)

**Resource Briefs** (single pages)

___ "What Is a Study Circle?"
___ "Leading a Study Circle"
___ "Organizing a Study Circle"
___ "The Role of the Participant"
___ "Developing Study Circle Course Material"
___ "Assistance with Study Circle Material Development"
___ "What Is the Study Circles Resource Center?"
___ "The Study Circles Resource Center Clearinghouse"

**Connections** (single-page descriptions of ongoing study circle efforts)

___ Adult Religious Education
___ Youth Programs
___ Study Circle Researchers
___ Unions

***Focus on Study Circles*** (free quarterly newsletter)

___ Sample copy
___ Subscription

**Other publications**

___ Clearinghouse list of study circle material
___ *Annotated Bibliography on Study Circles, Collaborative Learning, and Participatory Democracy*

Please send in your order, with payment if you order PTS programs, with your follow-up form on reverse.

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